

# **Strategic Implications of American Millennialism**

**A Monograph**

**by**

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## **Abstract**

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF AMERICAN MILLENNIALISM by MAJOR Brian L. Stuckert, U.S. ARMY, 61 pages.

Since the beginning of the Republic, various forms of millennial religious doctrines, of which dispensational pre-millennialism is the most recent, have shaped U.S. national security strategy. As the dominant form of millennialism in the U.S. evolves, it drives changes in U.S. security policy and subsequent commitment of the instruments of national power. Millennial ideas contribute to a common American understanding of international relations that guide our thinking irrespective of individual religious or political affiliation. Millennialism has great explanatory value, significant policy implications, and creates potential vulnerabilities that adversaries may exploit.

In the simplest usage of the word, millennialism refers to any belief system, religious or secular, which anticipates a purification of society or the world through dramatic and sweeping change. In the U.S. today, the most well-known and influential form of millennialism is a religious variant known in formal, theological parlance as dispensational pre-millennialism. This contemporary form of millennialism took shape during the 1970s and has significantly shaped current U.S. security policy. Dispensational pre-millennialism is loosely based on depictions of battle between the forces of good and evil in the biblical Book of Revelation. In the U.S., dispensational pre-millennialism contends that in the very near future Jesus Christ will ‘rapture,’ or remove his church from the Earth. A period of intense tribulations and battles will follow, culminating with a cataclysmic defeat of Satan. Jesus would then establish an earthly kingdom for 1,000 years – the millennium. Today, the theological doctrines of dispensational pre-millennialism contribute significantly to American culture. This has resulted in a pervasive sense of determinism and pessimism that has significant implications for U.S. security policy around the world.

Military leaders, planners and strategists require greater understanding of American millennial thought. Millennialism shapes both American culture and U.S. government policy. While most Americans are influenced to some degree by the ideas of pre-millennialism, many are unaware of the philosophical or theological underpinnings. Military leaders charged with interpreting policy into strategy and acting on behalf of the nation on the international stage cannot afford to remain ignorant of the effects of pre-millennialism. Due to a general lack of awareness of millennialism and an uneasy reticence to discuss religious factors, understanding and analysis of our own policies and motives is often deficient. Additionally, the cultural imprint that derives from millennialism impairs our understanding of the words, actions and motives of other actors on the world stage. These factors can be problematic for any military leader or planner attempting to achieve U.S. Government policy objectives through strategy, operations and programs.

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## WHY MILLENNIALISM MATTERS

The impact of American millennial religious ideas on U.S. Government policy will add to strategic hubris, compel increasingly reckless international action, and continue to over-commit the military in ways the Nation cannot afford. Military leaders, planners and strategists require greater awareness and understanding of American millennial thought. Millennialism has always been a feature of the American culture and has shaped not only the objectives of U.S. government policy, but also the way in which we interpret the words and actions of other actors on the international stage. Since the beginning of the Republic, various forms of millennial religious doctrines, of which dispensational pre-millennialism is the most recent, have shaped U.S. national security strategy. As the dominant form of millennialism in the U.S. evolves, it drives changes in U.S. security policy and subsequent commitment of the instruments of national power. Millennial ideas contribute to a common American understanding of international relations that guide our thinking irrespective of individual religious or political affiliation. Millennialism has great explanatory value, significant policy implications, and creates potential vulnerabilities that adversaries may exploit.

In the simplest usage of the word, millennialism refers to any belief system, religious or secular, which anticipates a purification of society or the world through dramatic and sweeping change. In the U.S. today, the most well-known and influential form of millennialism is a religious variant known in formal, theological parlance as dispensational pre-millennialism. This contemporary form of millennialism took shape during the 1970s and has significantly shaped current U.S. security policy. Dispensational pre-millennialism is loosely based on depictions of battle between the forces of good and evil in the biblical *Book of Revelation*. In the U.S., dispensational pre-millennialism contends that in the very near future Jesus Christ will ‘rapture,’ or remove his church from the Earth. A period of intense tribulations and battles will follow,

culminating with a cataclysmic defeat of Satan. Jesus would then establish an earthly kingdom for 1,000 years – the millennium. Today, the theological doctrines of dispensational pre-millennialism contribute significantly to American culture. This has resulted in a pervasive sense of determinism and pessimism in that has significant implications for U.S. security policy around the world.

While most Americans are influenced to some degree by the ideas of pre-millennialism, many are unaware of the philosophical or theological underpinnings. Military leaders charged with interpreting policy into strategy and acting on behalf of the nation on the international stage cannot afford to remain ignorant of the effects of pre-millennialism. Due to a general lack of awareness of millennialism and an uneasy reticence to discuss religious factors, understanding and analysis of our own policies and motives is often deficient or flawed. Additionally, the cultural imprint that derives from millennialism impairs our understanding of the words, actions and motives of other actors on the world stage. These factors can be problematic for any military leader or planner attempting to achieve U.S. Government policy objectives through strategy, operations and programs.

Military leaders and planners must recognize that, to the extent that actual and potential adversaries may analyze American millennial thought, there may be significant advantages available to the enemy. First, millennial thought and its policy implications may create strategic transparency that affords adversaries an advantage in decision-making. Second, an understanding of American millennial thinking may provide adversaries with the means to manipulate American policy and subsequent action. Third, the enemy may exploit American millennialism to increase the fragility of and even disrupt coalitions. Fourth, adversaries may exploit American millennialism to demoralize or terrorize joint forces and the American people. By recognizing these potential vulnerabilities, military leaders and planners may take action now to mitigate the effects.



This monograph will define and describe the basic theological concepts associated with millennialism. I will explain the development of the philosophy of dispensational pre-millennialism, with an emphasis on how dispensational pre-millennialism has been shaped by U.S. policy and global events. I will then explore the inverse of the relationship by examining the ways in which religion, and specifically various forms of millennialism, has shaped U.S. history and policy. The synthesis of American history and millennial theology will highlight the role of early American post-millennialism and the resulting tendency toward isolationism during the same period. I will examine the role of the U.S. Civil War in undermining the philosophy of post-millennialism and the influence of dispensational pre-millennialists such as Darby and Scofield in filling the philosophical void on the stage of American religion following that conflict. I will examine the interaction between World War I and the emerging ideas of pre-millennialism and the subsequent influence of this philosophy on shifting U.S. strategic attitudes. Most importantly, I will examine the import of the establishment of the state of Israel to American millennialism and subsequent security policy implications that dominate U.S. foreign relations today.

This monograph will employ 1967 to the present as the era of contemporary millennialism and illustrate how American religion provides extraordinary explanatory power for current conflicts and policy. I will consider the current religious psyche of the American electorate, shared cultural resources and current apocalyptic influences. I will explore potential impacts on policy making by examining the relationship of prominent millennial thinkers to U.S. presidential administrations, the influence of millennial thinkers and groups on the U.S. congress, and the impact of millennialism on contemporary U.S. culture as a component of the policy making environment. I will examine patterns of U.S. security policy in the Middle East, to include patterns of security cooperation with Israel. Finally, given a framework for understanding the relationship between millennialism and U.S. policy, I will suggest areas of concern, vulnerabilities and make suggestions for future action.

## THE ROLE OF CIVIL RELIGION AND CULTURE

“You can't look at the headlines these days — the Middle East is on the brink of all-out war, stifling heat waves are blanketing the United States and fundamentally different belief systems are clashing in the stem cell debate — and not conjure up apocalyptic visions.” – Chuck Raasch in *USA Today*, 20 July 2006<sup>1</sup>

According to American sociologist Robert Bellah, within the U.S. “there actually exists alongside of and rather clearly differentiated from the churches an elaborate and well-institutionalized civil religion<sup>2</sup> in America...this religious dimension-has its own seriousness and integrity and requires the same care in understanding that any other religion does.”<sup>3</sup> Americans are accustomed to frequent use of religious language by U.S. presidents, especially when discussing foreign affairs or security policy. The use of religious language and concepts to explain U.S. foreign policy is a common example of the influence of civil religion.

The U.S. bases its foreign affairs and security goals on Protestant millennial ideas that date back to seventeenth-century England.<sup>4</sup> Millennialism has always been a feature of the American culture and has shaped not only the objectives of U.S. government policy, but also the way in which we interpret the words and actions of other actors on the international stage. Americans have always practiced some form of millennialism. Protestant millennialism can take many forms. These different forms of millennialism can lead one to very different conclusions when used as a guide for government policy. Before the U.S. Civil War, Americans were heavily influenced by the dominant form of millennialism of that day known as post-millennialism. Since

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<sup>1</sup> Raasch, Chuck. ‘In the Headlines, Glimpses of the Apocalypse,’ *USA Today*, 20 July 2006. Available on-line: [http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/columnist/raasch/2006-07-20-raasch\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/columnist/raasch/2006-07-20-raasch_x.htm), retrieved on: 11 January 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Rousseau coined the term ‘civil religion’ in chapter 8, book 4 of *The Social Contract*. Rousseau asserted that civil religion was common agreement on the existence of God, the life to come, the reward of virtue and the punishment of vice, and the exclusion of religious intolerance. All other religious opinions are outside the cognizance of the state and may be freely held by citizens.

<sup>3</sup> Bellah, Robert N. ‘Civil Religion in America,’ *Dædalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Winter 1967, Vol. 96, No. 1, pp. 1-21. Available on-line: [http://www.robertbellah.com/articles\\_5.htm](http://www.robertbellah.com/articles_5.htm), retrieved 5 December 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Judis, John B. ‘The Chosen Nation: The Influence of Religion on U.S. Foreign Policy,’ *Policy Brief*, 37, March 2005, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1.

the Civil War, a new form of millennialism, known as dispensational pre-millennialism, has emerged as a significant component of American culture. Dispensational pre-millennialism and its concomitant apocalyptic worldview will continue to have numerous foreign policy and security implications for the United States in years to come.

Millennial ideas contribute to a common American understanding of international relations that in many cases transcend individual religious or political affiliation. Eschatological beliefs inform a culture's interpretations about how Christians are to be 'in the world but not of the world'<sup>5</sup> and "function to influence and justify collective action."<sup>6</sup> Where contemporary American millennialism is concerned, collective anxiety over things like apocalyptic war, an Anti-Christ alive and at work somewhere on the Earth and the need to secure our eternal destiny by our own hand will lead to a misguided foreign and security policy that increasingly relies upon employment of the military instrument of power.

Contemporary American millennialism, and especially its contributions to the broader culture, derives from and adapts to specifically political circumstances and concerns for which religion provides an underlying framework. Most scholars see a definite connection between apocalypticism and times of crisis.<sup>7</sup> In a period of crisis, there seems to be something within the human psyche that compels us to look for a different worldview as a coping mechanism. Pre-millennialism is psychologically appealing. Like other theologies, it offers an interpretive framework for events around us. Pre-millennialism is especially adept at explaining the more

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<sup>5</sup> *Gospel of John*, 17:15-18.

<sup>6</sup> Bruce, Steve. 'Y2K, The Apocalypse, and Evangelical Christianity: The Role of Eschatological Belief in Church Responses,' *Sociology of Religion*, Summer 2001. Available on-line: [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0SOR/is\\_2\\_62/ai\\_76759009/pg\\_3](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0SOR/is_2_62/ai_76759009/pg_3), retrieved 27 December 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Collins, John. 'Apocalypticism Explained: The Apocalyptic World View,' *Frontline*, originally broadcast on 22 November 1998, available on-line: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/explanation/doomindustry.html>, retrieved 6 November 2007.

troubling aspects of our world. More importantly, pre-millennialism offers not only a hope, but also a genuine expectancy that there may be a way to go to Heaven without dying.<sup>8</sup>

The determinism of millennialism is the quintessential linear thought pattern and coping mechanism. One of the most dramatic effects of millennialism is the underlying theme that the world is moving toward a definite end.<sup>9</sup> The prevalent form of millennialism in America functions as a type of deterministic fatalism. Much of the western world has come to accept that this is simply the way things are and we are disinclined to view the world as cyclical.<sup>10</sup> This makes American thought fundamentally different from the thinking of much of the rest of the world. Our thinking is affected by themes of inevitability and immediacy that results in a compulsion to act. This feature of western thought affects both religious and secular philosophies.<sup>11</sup> Secular considerations notwithstanding, the single most important factor in western apocalypticism are the *Bible*, specifically the books of *Daniel* and *Revelation*. In the Bible and subsequent philosophical interpretations, we can trace the source of our linear, teleological view of deterministic history.<sup>12</sup>

## MILLENNIAL THEOLOGIES IN AMERICA

Millennialism, and especially dispensational pre-millennialism, derives in large part from extraordinary literalism of even the most figurative passages of the *Bible*. In America, literalism in biblical interpretation is most closely associated with fundamentalism. Theologically, it is best to begin a discussion of American millennialism with a brief review of fundamentalism as the

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<sup>8</sup> North, Gary. 'The Unannounced Reason Behind American Fundamentalism's Support for the State of Israel,' 19 July 2000. Available on-line: <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article1585.htm>, retrieved 29 December 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Collins, John. 'Apocalypticism Explained: The Apocalyptic World View,' *Frontline*, originally broadcast on 22 November 1998, available on-line: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/explanation/doomindustry.html>, retrieved 6 November 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Marxism is an example of this.

<sup>12</sup> Collins, John. 'Apocalypticism Explained: The Apocalyptic World View,' *Frontline*, originally broadcast on 22 November 1998, available on-line: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/explanation/doomindustry.html>, retrieved 6 November 2007.

term applies to the contemporary American religious tradition. Fundamentalism is a frequently misunderstood term in America.<sup>13</sup> Although it has connections to each, fundamentalism is distinct from evangelicalism, the charismatic<sup>14</sup> movement or conservative Christianity in general. Fundamentalism is also poorly understood when we attempt to define it as a personality style, a form of militancy, or a particular worldview.<sup>15</sup> The central doctrine of fundamentalism is that the Bible is inspired by God and is an infallible account of the words of God. There are, however, two other important heritages associated with American fundamentalism: dispensational pre-millennialism and the holiness or Pentecostal movement.<sup>16</sup> Fundamentalism can be understood through the inverse of the relationship by examining the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century American development of pre-millennialism and the holiness-Pentecostal movement and how these have grown in tandem with fundamentalism and one another.

In order to understand the impact on culture and policy, we must recognize the uniquely American aspect of our prominent religious traditions. While influences from a general European and North American spiritual renewal are evident,<sup>17</sup> New England Puritanism, as shaped by the

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<sup>13</sup> Within the American context, the term has its beginnings in the 1880s at the Princeton Theological Seminary. Archibald Hodge and Benjamin Warfield were noted for their defense of biblical accuracy and authority in the face of modernist criticisms. After 1919 fundamentalism became an organized movement when 6,000 people attended the World's Christian Fundamentals Association conference in Philadelphia. Shortly thereafter, fundamentalist coalitions began to form within Baptist and Presbyterian churches. It is important to note that while Presbyterians may be sympathetic to the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, they generally do not concur with the doctrine of dispensational pre-millennialism.

<sup>14</sup> Within a religious context, this term generally applies to individuals and groups that profess a supernatural indwelling of the Holy Spirit, many times manifested in the form of supernatural spiritual gifts, such as speaking in tongues.

<sup>15</sup> Wuthnow, Robert. 'The World of Fundamentalism,' *The Christian Century*, April 22, 1992, pp. 426-429. Available on-line: <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=230>, retrieved 28 December 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Pentecostals are well known for their public confession of sins, affirmation of belief in Jesus, speaking in tongues and miraculous healing; they claim to experience a spiritual renewal, which they attribute to a supernatural action of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>17</sup> Kostlevy, William. 'The Dispensationalists: Embarrassing Relatives or Prophets Without Honor: Reflections on Mark Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*,' Wesley Center for Applied Theology, Northwest Nazarene University, 2003. Available on-line: [http://wesley.nnu.edu/Wesleyan\\_theology/theojml/31-35/32-1-10c.htm](http://wesley.nnu.edu/Wesleyan_theology/theojml/31-35/32-1-10c.htm), retrieved 29 December 2007.

First Great Awakening,<sup>18</sup> is distinctly American. Although no longer known by that name, it remains fundamentally opposed to Protestant orthodoxy. This tendency has left America with a strong proclivity for experiential religion leading directly to the phenomenon of contemporary evangelicalism. American evangelicalism emerged after World War II and did “much to unify and revitalize conservative Protestantism.”<sup>19</sup> While incorporating many of the same ideas, evangelicalism generally had a moderating effect on American fundamentalism. In the 1970s, the trend began to move the other way with fundamentalism exerting more influence in response to a perceived decline in the moral condition of America.<sup>20</sup> This influence is most pronounced within non-denominational, Southern and independent Baptist and Pentecostal churches. The phenomenon of pre-millennial ideas has successfully crossed denominational boundaries during the last three decades, owing much to the success of publishing, broadcasting and other media efforts designed to spread pre-millennialism.

An understanding of different philosophical and interpretive approaches to the *Book of Revelation* is essential to an appreciation for millennial theologies, and especially dispensational pre-millennialism. Philosophical approaches to the *Book of Revelation* center on two important interpretive questions. The first concerns the historical referent or context in which one understands the visions related in *Revelation* chapter 6:1 through chapter 18:24. The second question concerns the way in which the thousand-year period of *Revelation* chapter 20 is characterized. In America, millennial philosophies reside within a larger debate related to interpretive methods for reading the *New Testament* book of *Revelation*.

With respect to the first question of historical context or referent, we can discern four broad methods. These methods generally determine an outlook on the text from chapter 6:1

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<sup>18</sup> The Great Awakening was 1725-1760. Based on widespread optimism and expectation of future triumphs in the cause of righteousness, post-millennialism was widely accepted and fit well with the Puritan idea that the colonists were a chosen people.

through chapter 18:24 of the *Book of Revelation*, but have significant implications for millennial thought. These different interpretive methods are commonly referred to as historicist, preterist, spiritualist and futurist.

With respect to the second question, there are three broad methods within the idea of millennialism. It is here that the influence of fundamentalism, with its unique literalism, becomes important. Millennialism actually refers to any system of belief or interpretation that employs a literal thousand years, or chiliad, in reading and applying *Revelation 20:1-7*:

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while. Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.”

The word millennial or millennium is Latin in origin and therefore does not appear in Scripture. The Greek word used in *Revelation 20:1-7* is from "chilioi," which means "a thousand." Historically, the concept we refer to as millennialism was originally known as chiliasm and the associated period of time was referred to as the chiliad.

The historicist or historical method interprets the *Book of Revelation* as a “panoramic outline of church history from the apostolic era to the Second Coming of Christ.”<sup>21</sup> The historicist

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<sup>19</sup> Wuthnow, Robert. ‘The World of Fundamentalism,’ *The Christian Century*, April 22, 1992, pp. 426-429. Available on-line: <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=230>, retrieved 28 December 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Nelson Publishers. *Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts*. Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 1993, p. 486.

approach asserts that prophecy has been unfolding since shortly after *Revelation* was written and continues to unfold now. This method renders *Revelation* as a “prewritten record of the course of history”<sup>22</sup> and was the traditional Protestant<sup>23</sup> interpretation for many centuries. The historicist method may be used with the post-millennial or amillennial philosophies.

The preterist<sup>24</sup> method of interpretation places the events of the *Book of Revelation* 6:1 through 18:24 during the times of the Roman Empire, normally the late first and second centuries. Preterists are divided on the fulfillment of the prophecies in the final chapters of *Revelation*. Some believe they had their fulfillment in the past, while some believe that the final chapters speak of yet future events.

The idealist, spiritual or symbolic approach<sup>25</sup> interprets the *Book of Revelation* as describing the general nature of the conflict between good and evil, but does not attempt to correlate events or symbols within the book to any specific point in history. Within this interpretative method, we may discern two distinct schools of thought. While most see the *Book of Revelation* as providing insight to “transcendent spiritual realities,”<sup>26</sup> some see fulfillment as entirely spiritual. Most idealists, however, believe that the conflict between good and evil manifests itself in the physical, temporal world as conflict between Christians and anti-Christian world powers, eventually leading to vindication. They tend to see these interactions as recurrent and do not see fulfillment in any single, specific historical events. Many borrow freely from the preterist method and find a primary application in the Roman Empire while seeing a secondary, spiritual application continuing to this day. Idealists typically subscribe to some form of amillennialism, since a figurative rendering is consistent with this interpretive approach.

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<sup>22</sup> Gregg, Steve (ed.). *Revelation Four Views: A Parallel Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997, 2.

<sup>23</sup> As the leading Protestant interpretation, several versions of the historicist method have specifically demonized Catholicism, especially after the Reformation.

<sup>24</sup> From the Latin word for ‘past.’

<sup>25</sup> The literature offers no clear consensus on a label for this interpretative approach.

<sup>26</sup> Gregg, Steve (ed.). *Revelation Four Views: A Parallel Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997, 3.



Finally, the futurist approach interprets the *Book of Revelation* as describing still yet future events that will accompany the end of the world. The futurist interpretive method is essential to pre-millennial philosophical systems and will be the focus of much of the discussion that follows.

Turning now to the second question, there are essentially three major philosophies with respect to millennialism that derive from *Revelation* 20:1-7. These are commonly referred to as post-millennialism, pre-millennialism, and amillennialism. Millennialism is not unique to Christianity. Most religions feature some future time when good will overcome evil and peace will reign. Zoroastrianism<sup>27</sup> featured a period of a thousand years of peace from evil. Zoroastrians believe they first promulgated the concept of a singular, all-powerful god, and the coming of a redeemer to save the world from the evil. *The Apocrypha*<sup>28</sup> contains numerous references to a time of universal peace, which would be ruled by the people of God.

Up to the close of the tenth century, many Christians could and quite likely did assume that the 1,000 years was a literal measure of time between the first and second comings of Christ. Since this coming was universally identified with the last judgment, the approach of the year 1000 was terrifying for many.<sup>29</sup> When the year 1000 came and went without the return of Christ, most concluded the number was intended figuratively or symbolically. The impetus of millennial philosophies is found in the hope for a better world. Their view of *Revelation* was that Christ would intervene, at the right moment, and bring about a change in world events. Elwell emphasizes this aspect when he writes "... the essential apocalyptic message remained as the book taught the living hope of the immediate direct intervention of God to reverse history and to

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<sup>27</sup> Zoroastrianism is the religion based on the teachings of Zoroaster, also known as Zarathustra. The religion originated in Persia in the 5<sup>th</sup> century b.C. and had its greatest number of adherents then.

<sup>28</sup> I am not attempting to present a list of apocryphal texts. I am using the term in its most general sense to refer to religious or Jewish historical texts that are normally not included in the canon of Scripture due to uncertain authenticity or questionable authorship.

<sup>29</sup> Sarver, Mark. *Dispensationalism: Part I - Millennial Views Prior to the Rise of Dispensationalism*, Grace On-line Library. Available on-line: <http://www.graceonlinelibrary.org/articles/full.asp?id=9|21|653>, retrieved 29 December 2007.

overcome evil with good. Such an outlook brought great comfort to believers who suffered from persecution by the forces of Imperial Rome. Expressed in a form that has been called historic premillennialism, this hope seems to have been the prevailing eschatology during the first three centuries of the Christian era, and is found in the works of Papias, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Methodius, Commodianus, and Lactantius."<sup>30</sup>

Post-millennialism views the millennium as a type of golden age of the church, which is sometime in the future. In post-millennialism, the millennium precedes the second coming of Jesus Christ. Post-millennialism bases its theories on the method of biblical exegesis known as covenant theology. Using this method, humanity's redemption is centered on the covenants God made with various figures throughout the biblical narrative. For example, in the Garden of Eden, man was given the covenant of work to tend the Garden; Adam after the Fall received one of grace, Noah, Abraham, Moses David, and the New Covenant. In theory, all of these covenants are one, as opposed to pre-millennial dispensationalism, which teaches two different Divine salvation plans for Christians and Jews.

Today, post-millennialism is most powerful as part of an undefined Christian ideal, especially in discussion of moral or social issues within the realm of domestic policy.<sup>31</sup> This particular philosophy can be seen in Dominion Theology and Reconstructionist movements. The domestic policies of many pre-millennialists often reflect the ideas and urges that we would recognize from the post-millennialist program of early America. Post-millennialism was very popular in the first of American history. Religiously motivated public policy was common and

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<sup>30</sup> Elwell, Walter A. Ed., *Evangelical Dictionary Of Theology*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 714. Papias was the Bishop of Hierapolis in the early part of the second century. Irenaeus was the Bishop of Lugdunum and Christian apologist in the late second and early third centuries. Justin Martyr Christian apologist in the first half of the second century. Justin Martyr was a prolific writer and much of his writing survives to this day. Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus, a Christian apologist in Carthage during the late second and early third centuries. Hippolytus was a disciple of Irenaeus and prolific Christian apologist in the late second and early third centuries. Methodius was the Archbishop of Great Moravia in the ninth century who is best known for translating the Bible into Old Church Slavonic. Commodianus was an obscure Christian poet in the third century. Lucius Caelius Firmianus Lactantius was a Christian apologist in the late third and early fourth centuries.

often had as its goal a millennial society. Americans generally believed that things were getting better. One example is the Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries which led many to think in terms of the dawning of a new age. The replacement of post-millennialism with pre-millennialism has not necessarily obviated the behaviors associated with the civil religion of American Exceptionalism, which derived from post-millennialism.

Within the American tradition, one of the logical results of post-millennialism was the impulse to establish utopian, millennial societies to create and preserve the millennial conditions that would hasten the second coming of Jesus Christ. These efforts manifested themselves in a variety of forms and on vastly different scales.<sup>32</sup> The millennial society that is most familiar to Americans is also the most overlooked: America itself. From its inception, the American Republic was sincerely intended to be one nation, under God. The goals of the founding fathers were straightforward where the formation of a ‘more perfect union’ was concerned. The primary argument in the early days of the Republic for public funding of education was to enable every citizen to read the Bible. Post-millennialism asserted itself repeatedly in the early days of our nation’s history with concepts such as American Exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny. Post-millennial America was characterized by optimism and a sense of confidence concerning what America, as God’s chosen nation, could accomplish. The reality of the U.S. Civil War made many of these ideas untenable and today few Americans have an optimistic worldview, so post-millennialism appears confined to history for the time being.

Since World War I, the philosophy of dispensational pre-millennialism has steadily gained acceptance and since the 1970s has come to dominate. The popularity of pre-millennialism, and especially dispensational pre-millennialism is such that it is usually what is meant when people use the word millennialism. Prominent pre-millennialist writers such as Hal

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<sup>31</sup> This is sometimes referred to as Neo-Reconstructionism or Dominion Theology.

<sup>32</sup> One well-known example is the creation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by Joseph Smith and the subsequent westward migration to Utah by Mormons led by his successors.

Lindsey, John Walvoord, Tim LaHaye, J. Dwight Pentecost, John Hagee and others assert that their philosophy about the return of Christ has always been the doctrine of the historical church. Walvoord makes the following statement regarding the historical nature of pre-millennialism: "The testimony of history unites in one river of evidence that the theology of the Old and New Testament and the theology of the early church was not only pre-millennial, but that its pre-millennialism was practically undisputed except by heretics and skeptics until the time of Augustine. The coming of Christ as the prelude for the establishment of a kingdom of righteousness on earth in fulfillment of the Old Testament kingdom prophecies was the almost uniform expectation both of the Jews at the time of the incarnation and of the early church. This is essential pre-millennialism however it may differ in its details from its modern counterpart."<sup>33</sup>

Walvoord and others refer to statements made by Justin Martyr<sup>34</sup> as proof that the early church believed in a millennial reign of Christ upon the earth. "I, and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare. ... And, further, there was a certain man with us whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that there after the general and, in short, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place."<sup>35</sup> The first decided opponent of whom we have knowledge was Caius,<sup>36</sup> about the year 200 A.D. The way in which chiliasm entered into the philosophy of Montanism<sup>37</sup> created significant opposition to millenarian views. The Alexandrian school, particularly

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<sup>33</sup> Walvoord, John. *The Millennial Kingdom*, Zondervan, 1973, p. 113-114

<sup>34</sup> Justin Martyr (100-165 A.D.) was a Christian author in the early second century.

<sup>35</sup> Terry, M. a quote from Justin's Dialogue with Trypho, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, p. 484

<sup>36</sup> Caius was a Christian author who lived around the beginning of the third century.

<sup>37</sup> Montanism was a Christian sectarian movement named for its founder, Montanus. The movement centered on Asia Minor and was in existence from the second to the eighth centuries. Montanism is perhaps most well known for its belief in continuing revelation, which normally took the form of ecstatic utterances. The most well known follower of Montanism was Tertullian.

Origen,<sup>38</sup> opposed millennialism. Millennialism was still common, however, in the time of Jerome, who himself was one of its opponents.

Augustine<sup>39</sup> is noted for his opposition to millennialism (chiliasm). In his *City of God*, Augustine argued strongly for a distinction between the city of God, which he identified as the church, and the political cities of man. Augustine's philosophy argued that the church was the spiritual kingdom of God upon the earth, and that the church was presently in the millennium. The bulk of scholarly work indicates that amillennialism has been the dominant view of the church since its inception. According to Louis Berkhof, "Some premillennialists have spoken of Amillennialism as a new view and as one of the most recent novelties, but this is certainly not in accord with the testimony of history. The name is indeed new, but the view to which it is applied is as old as Christianity. It had at least as many advocates as Chiliasm among the Church Fathers of the second and third centuries, supposed to have been the heyday of Chiliasm. It has ever since been the view most widely accepted, is the only view that is either expressed or implied in the great historical Confessions of the Church, and has always been the prevalent view in Reformed circles"<sup>40</sup> Martin Luther taught amillennial eschatology as well.

The word amillennialism is essentially an acknowledgement of the importance of millennial philosophies since it seeks to define the absence of millennialism with respect to the millennium. The amillennial view is that the second coming of Jesus Christ will be the end of the world.

From the time of Augustine, the prevailing view on the return of Christ was amillennial. There were, at times of severe persecutions, those who would arise with a renewed interest in millennialism. It was not until the nineteenth century that a more effective advocate for millennialism would arise in John Darby.

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<sup>38</sup> Origen (c. 185-c.254) was an early Christian author.

<sup>39</sup> Aurelius Augustinus, 354-430. Bishop of Hippo Regius in present-day Algeria. Well known for his formulation of the concepts of original sin and just war.

A pre-millennial eschatology is the belief that when Christ returns to earth, he will conquer Satan and establish a 1000-year reign on earth. Pre-millennialists see the world as getting progressively worse, moving toward an apocalyptic end that signals the return of Christ. Social events are interpreted through this viewpoint that is predisposed toward and anticipating God's intervention in world events.<sup>41</sup>

John Darby<sup>42</sup> is rightly considered the father of dispensational pre-millennialism. His view on the Second Coming (or advent or parousia) of Jesus Christ is what most Americans have in mind when they speak of pre-millennialism. Darby's theology divided the scheme of God's redemption into various dispensations, or periods of time,<sup>43</sup> during which God tests man in respect to his obedience to some specific revelation from God.

Darby's dispensational pre-millennialism defines the millennium as the future period of human history during which Jesus Christ will reign personally and visibly with His followers on

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<sup>40</sup> Berkhof, Louis. *Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996, 708.

<sup>41</sup> Bruce, Steve. 'Y2K, The Apocalypse, and Evangelical Christianity: The Role of Eschatological Belief in Church Responses,' *Sociology of Religion*, Summer 2001, 3. Available on-line: [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0SOR/is\\_2\\_62/ai\\_76759009/pg\\_3](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0SOR/is_2_62/ai_76759009/pg_3), retrieved 27 December 2007.

<sup>42</sup> 1800-1882, educated at Trinity College in Dublin, he was ordained an Anglican minister after abandoning the practice of law. He became influential among the Plymouth Brethren. In the 1830s, he developed ideas that the 'kingdom' prophesied in the *Book of Isaiah* referred to something other than the Christian church. In 1832 at the Powerscourt Conference, he set forth his concept of a secret rapture (catching up). Over the next several decades, he developed the doctrine known today as dispensational pre-millennialism, which he effectively promulgated on numerous preaching tours in the United States following the Civil War. At about the same time that Darby was developing the doctrine of dispensational pre-millennialism, William Miller developed his own version of pre-millennialism. Miller believed that the year 1844 was significant in Bible prophecy. In this year, Jesus Christ was to return and establish His kingdom upon the earth. This year came and went, but Jesus had not returned as Miller had predicted. Miller then abandoned this particular belief, but some of his followers persisted with renewed prophetic visions. Today, this group is known as Seventh-Day Adventists.

<sup>43</sup> These periods of time, or dispensations, are known in a number of ways, and have refined their terminology over the last 150 years. After reviewing much of the leading literature, I compiled a taxonomy of the most common terms. The First Dispensation is known as the Creation or Innocence Dispensation and generally encompasses the state of paradise found at the creation of the world, includes the Fall, or crisis of conscience, and ends with the Noahic Flood. The Second Dispensation is known as the Noahic Covenant and is said to represent a period of time characterized by human government. The Third Dispensation is known as the Abrahamic Covenant and is also known as the period of promise. The Fourth Dispensation is known as the Israelite or Sinai Dispensation and is characterized by the Mosaic Law. The Fifth Dispensation is known as the Pentecost, Church or Gentile Dispensation. The Sixth Dispensation is known as the Spirit Dispensation and will feature the Great Tribulation. The Seventh Dispensation is known as the Millennial Kingdom or simply as the Millennium and features the Great White Throne Judgment which will

and over the earth for a literal thousand years. Darby developed additional concepts with respect to the millennium. He taught that a visible coming of Christ would precede it. This coming will be in two stages, the rapture and the appearing, with a considerable interval of time between them, in which important events will take place. Pre-millennialists base their theory of the rapture on *First Thessalonians* 4:16-17:

“For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.”<sup>44</sup>

Throughout most of church history, this passage was almost exclusively understood to refer to the day of final judgment.<sup>45</sup> In the middle 19<sup>th</sup> century, first in England, then in North America, it began to be associated with the newly developing ideas of a pre-millennial rapture. According to pre-millennialists, the rapture may take place at any moment, and will certainly precede a period of time that Darby referred to as ‘the great tribulation.’ Darby correlates references in Scripture to the “blessed hope” of the church with the rapture. Inherent in this philosophy is a definition of the church as those, and those only, which are saved between Pentecost and the rapture. The church age is a mystery period which Darby explained as a ‘parenthesis’ dispensation that he could not locate within prophecy between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of the prophetic time table based on *Daniel* chapter nine. Between the rapture and the appearing, Darby placed the events of the last week of the prophecy of *Daniel* chapter 9, *Matthew* chapter 24, and Revelation chapters

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initiate the millennial reign. Darby believed that each dispensation had its own system of salvation, which allowed future dispensations to possess a different scheme of redemption.

<sup>44</sup> While this passage is the basis for ideas about the rapture, the word does not appear in this passage or anywhere else in the Greek text or any English translation. The word is derived from the Latin *rapturo*, which Jerome used in this passage to translate the Greek *harpazo*, which means to seize or catch up. The Greek is most commonly translated into English as ‘caught up,’ as it is here in the English Standard Version.

<sup>45</sup> North, Gary. ‘The Unannounced Reason Behind American Fundamentalism's Support for the State of Israel,’ 19 July 2000. Available on-line: <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article1585.htm>, retrieved 29 December 2007.

four through nineteen. After the rapture, a Jewish 'remnant' will take the place of the church as God's instrument for the conversion of others remaining on the Earth.

Allis states that the "primary features of this movement were two in number. The one related to the Church. It was the result of the profound dissatisfaction felt at that time by many earnest Christians with the worldliness and temporal security of the Church of England and of many of the dissenting communions in the British Isles. The other had to do with prophecy; it represented a very marked emphasis on the coming of the Lord as a present hope and immediate expectation."<sup>46</sup> Clarence B. Bass points out that the system of dispensational pre-millennialism revolves around its principle of interpretation. "The paradox of the system lies precisely at this point: one cannot logically accept the chronology of dispensationalism without also accepting its basic principle of interpretation - that God works under different principles with mankind in different dispensations."<sup>47</sup>

The growth of dispensational pre-millennialism in the United States is an interesting phenomenon. Most scholars point to the effective advocacy of two writers: W.E. Blackstone<sup>48</sup> and Cyrus Scofield. Blackstone is the author of *Jesus Is Coming*, which was published in 1878 and served largely to communicate the concepts of Darby's theology. As effective as Blackstone's work was, it was soon eclipsed by *The Scofield Reference Bible*, first published in 1909 and revised in 1917. A contemporary revision was published in 1967. Allis, referring to *The Scofield Reference Bible*, says: "This is the Bible of Dispensationalists, and has probably done as much to popularize the prophetic teachings of Darby and the Brethren as all other agencies put

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<sup>46</sup> Allis, Oswald T. *Prophecy And The Church*, The Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 9. Oswald T. Allis, 1880-1973. Professor of Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary. Author of *Prophecy and the Church* (1945) and *God Spoke By Moses* (1951).

<sup>47</sup> Bass, Clarence B. *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism, Its Historical Genesis and Ecclesiastical Implications*, Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2005, 19.

<sup>48</sup> William E. Blackstone, 1841-1935. Blackston was a student of Dwight Lyman Moody and took a special interest in writing and teaching about the pre-millennial return, rapture of the church, and the restoration of Israelites to Palestine. In 1881, he published the influential *Jesus is Coming*.



together."<sup>49</sup> Vlach simply refers to the Scofield Reference Bible as the "greatest influence in the spread of dispensationalism."<sup>50</sup>

In addition to the efforts of individual authors, dispensational pre-millennialism also benefited from two other efforts of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century: the Bible Conference Movement and the Bible Institute Movement. Beginning in the 1870s, dispensational pre-millennialists began to spread their ideas through a number of large Bible Conferences throughout the U.S. Two especially well known conferences were the Niagara Conferences, which ran from 1870 until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the American Bible and Prophetic Conferences, which ran from 1878 to 1914. During the same period of time, individual authors and Bible Conferences were reinforced and abetted by the Bible Institute Movement. Notable examples of schools established during this time include the Nyack Bible Institute founded in 1882, Boston Missionary Training School founded in 1889, and Moody Bible Institute founded in 1886. The most well known of these today is Moody Bible Institute with a large campus in Chicago undergraduate and graduate programs and nationwide publishing and broadcasting subsidiaries. The current doctrinal statement of Moody Bible Institute shows that the school's purpose of teaching dispensational pre-millennialism is just as strong and clear today as it was when first established.<sup>51</sup>

American dispensational pre-millennialists have shown themselves especially adept at adapting the exigencies of contemporary geo-politics to bolster the appeal of their theology. Without questioning the effectiveness of Blackstone and Scofield in writing or persuading, it would be an oversimplification to think that their writings alone could have wrought such a profound impact on American religion. Dispensational pre-millennialism owes at least as much to

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<sup>49</sup> Allis, Oswald T. *Prophecy And The Church*, Phillipsburg, NJ: The Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 13-14.

<sup>50</sup> Vlach, Michael J. 'What Is Dispensationalism?,' *TheologicalStudies.org*. Available on-line: <http://www.theologicalstudies.org/disp.html>, retrieved 30 December 2007.

<sup>51</sup> Moody Bible Institute. Organizational web-site. Available on-line: [www.moody.edu](http://www.moody.edu), retrieved 11 December 2007.

the U.S. Civil War, World War I and the Balfour Declaration as it does to Blackstone and Scofield, neither of who would have sold many books without these events.

The U.S. Civil War shook the foundations of American post-millennialism, which had been the dominant philosophy within American religion up until the War Between the States. Before the Civil War, American civil religion centered on the Revolution, which was commonly seen as the “final act of the Exodus from the old lands across the waters.”<sup>52</sup> Adding to the intensity of emotion evoked by the fratricidal nature of the conflict, the U.S. Civil War was one of the bloodiest conflicts of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century by any measure. The Civil War convinced a significant number of American Christians that their notions of a millennial state on the North American continent were clearly misguided, or tragically failed at best. In the place of post-millennialistic ideas of a developing utopian society, new ideas of death, sacrifice, and rebirth emerged from the conflict.<sup>53</sup> This created a philosophical void, which was immediately filled by Darby, Blackstone and Scofield. *The Scofield Reference Bible* appeared genuinely prophetic to many when World War I and the Balfour Declaration followed it so quickly.

Today, books promulgating dispensational pre-millennialism have grown exponentially. Leading dispensational pre-millennialists such as Hal Lindsey, John F. Walvoord,<sup>54</sup> Tim LaHaye, Paul Lalonde, and John Hagee are mainstream best sellers. In their task, they have continued to be abetted by world events such as the creation of the political state of Israel and its attendant Middle East strife, the post-World War I rise of the Soviet Union and the post-World War II emergence of China as an eastern power. The result is that the concepts of pre-millennialism have grown into a common, normative frame of reference rooted in faith through which many Americans interpret the world and especially events within the foreign policy arena.

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<sup>52</sup> Bellah, Robert N. ‘Civil Religion in America,’ *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Winter 1967, Vol. 96, No. 1, pp. 1-21. Available on-line: [http://www.robertbellah.com/articles\\_5.htm](http://www.robertbellah.com/articles_5.htm), retrieved 5 December 2007.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

## POST-MILLENNIALISM AND THE FOUNDING OF AMERICA

Dr. Leo Ribuffo of George Washington University suggests that the relationship between religion in America and foreign relations exists on many levels.<sup>55</sup> First, it is important to understand how American religious beliefs contribute to American exceptionalism. Exceptionalism is an important concept because it contributes to the idea that America has a unique, divinely appointed purpose in the world. Both Presidents Carter and Reagan clearly subscribed to exceptionalism and frequently echoed John Winthrop's call to "build a city on a hill."<sup>56</sup> Tensions between religiously oriented interest groups and religious issues in other countries may influence U.S. foreign policy. It is important to examine the implications of religious doctrines and the specific actions they seem to call for in terms of U.S. foreign policy. Finally, foreign religious influences affect U.S. foreign policy directly and indirectly.

Prior to the founding of the U.S., English Puritans believed that England was to be a 'new Israel.' They practiced a form of post-millennialism that caused them to be optimistic about England's role as a force for righteousness in the world. Following the collapse of Cromwell's revolution in 1658, most believers lost faith in their millennial theories with respect to England and transferred their hopes to the colonies of New England. This new, American version of Protestant millennialism was described in the 1740s as "the dawning, or at least the prelude, of that glorious work of God."<sup>57</sup> Before the Revolution, Protestant theology made important contributions to American culture. Notable among these are the ideas of covenant theology,

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<sup>54</sup> 1910-2002. President of Dallas Theological Seminary from 1952 to 1986 and a prolific author with more than 30 published works, the majority of which deal with dispensational pre-millennialism.

<sup>55</sup> Ribuffo, Leo. Religion and American Foreign Policy: The Story of a Complex Relationship. *The National Interest*, Summer, 1998.

<sup>56</sup> Winthrop, John, "A Model of Christian Charity", in Conrad Cherry, *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny* (Englewood: Prentice Hall, 1971), pp. 39-43.

<sup>57</sup> Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), a noted Congregational preacher and theologian, quoted in Judis, John B. 'The Chosen Nation: The Influence of Religion on U.S. Foreign Policy,' *Policy Brief*, 37, March 2005, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2.

original sin, the chosen people concept<sup>58</sup> and millennialism in its various forms. Covenant theology, in concert with the chosen people concept, provided the rationale and moral justification for the American Revolution. The theological doctrine of original sin formed and continues to influence our ideas about the size and role of government as well as the relationship between society and the individual. Unlike these other theological components of American culture, the effects of millennialism are neither consistent nor easily explained. The Great Awakening was 1725-1760. Based on widespread optimism and expectation of future triumphs in the cause of righteousness, post-millennialism was widely accepted and fit well with the Puritan idea that the colonists were a chosen people. In this way, Protestant millennialism gave us the themes and language of American civil religion and exceptionalism.

American millennialism responds to the exigencies of the times. In the case of pre-Civil War America, the chosen people became the members of the churches who were one in the same with the citizens of the new nation. During this period of national optimism, the millennium was understood to be a sometimes literal, sometimes figurative one thousand-year reign of religious and political liberty that would hasten the Second Coming of Christ. The enemy of the 'chosen people' was seen in English rule, Catholicism, the native peoples, and other competitors for the resources of the continent. The ideas and language of millennialism so thoroughly infused the broader civil religion and political speech of the time that they are nearly indistinguishable from one another. It is in this way that millennialism framed the specific foreign affairs and security policies of the time and gave shape to American objectives.

The American Revolution served to further entrench the dominant millennial theory of that day. The U.S. was founded on the basis of a post-millennial expectation that America would

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<sup>58</sup> Wald, Kenneth D. *Religion and Politics in the United States*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1992, 45.

be “the fertile soil bed for the New Kingdom.”<sup>59</sup> Following American independence, preachers such as Timothy Dwight and David Tappan predicted America would have established by the year 2000 a righteous kingdom prepared for Christ's millennial reign.<sup>60</sup> In a manner similar to the Israelite conquest of Canaan, the post-millennial beliefs of that day engendered broad consensus that America should grow in power, acquire additional territory and become an important economic force in the world. These beliefs were the direct result of post-millennial religious beliefs, which held sway in the early days of the Republic. In 1783, Ezra Stiles said that the example of the United States would spread the "empire of reason" and thus hasten the establishment of God's kingdom on earth.<sup>61</sup> In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the impulse to expand, by force when necessary, enjoyed broad support.<sup>62</sup> Today, we refer to this widely understood phenomenon as Manifest Destiny.<sup>63</sup>

Manifest Destiny coincided with the second Great Awakening.<sup>64</sup> One important impact of American religion on U.S. foreign policy was the impulse to engage in missionary activity associated with the second Great Awakening. American Protestants sought to influence U.S. governmental policy to facilitate missionary undertakings. Ribuffo's analysis indicates that many Protestant missionaries came to act in a way that would cause us to label them as lobbyists today.<sup>65</sup> Another important feature of this period of American history was the initial fracturing of

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<sup>59</sup> Bruce, Steve. 'Y2K, The Apocalypse, and Evangelical Christianity: The Role of Eschatological Belief in Church Responses,' *Sociology of Religion*, Summer 2001. Available on-line: [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0SOR/is\\_2\\_62/ai\\_76759009/pg\\_3](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0SOR/is_2_62/ai_76759009/pg_3), retrieved 27 December 2007.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. Dwight lived 1752-1817 and Tappan lived 1752-1803.

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in Leo Ribuffo, *Religion and American Foreign Policy: The Story of a Complex Relationship*. *The National Interest*, Summer, 1998

<sup>62</sup> Quakers and Mennonites were notable for their dissent on the use of force under any circumstances, least of all for the purpose of territorial acquisition.

<sup>63</sup> John O'Sullivan coined the phrase Manifest Destiny near the end of this period, in 1845. The American claim to Oregon was "by right of our manifest destiny to overspread and possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the great experiment of liberative and federative self-government entrusted to us."

<sup>64</sup> Seventh-Day Adventism and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints both came into existence during this time.

<sup>65</sup> Ribuffo, Leo. *Religion and American Foreign Policy: The Story of a Complex Relationship*. *The National Interest*, Summer, 1998. Missionary activities at this time were focused on Asia.

mainstream Protestant groups over the increasingly contentious issue of slavery. Methodists split on the issue in 1844, followed by Baptists in 1845 and Presbyterians in 1857.

## **CIVIL WAR, WORLD WAR AND THE RISE OF PRE-MILLENNIALISM**

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord:  
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;  
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword:  
His truth is marching on.  
Glory, glory, hallelujah! Glory, glory, hallelujah!  
Glory, glory, hallelujah!  
His truth is marching on. *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, 1862<sup>66</sup>

Now prophesy all these words against them and say to them: The LORD will roar from on high; he will thunder from his holy dwelling and roar mightily against his land. He will shout like those who tread the grapes, shout against all who live on the earth. *Jeremiah 25:30*

The American Civil War was the turning point for eschatology in this country. Since the founding of the Republic, the vast majority of Americans were post-millennialists of one type or another. They generally viewed the United States as God's chosen people with a special role in the world. Their worldview was one of overall optimism in that they believed that things would generally improve until they ushered in an age (for some literally one thousand years, for others a figurative period of time) of Christian righteousness and peace followed by the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The Civil War falsified the American version of post-millennialism in the starkest of terms. Americans killing each other in all-out war was clearly incompatible with the ideas of post-millennialism. Throughout the War, southerners attempted to recast post-millennial theories to fit the Confederacy, but this proved unworkable with the eventual defeat and Reconstruction.<sup>67</sup>

The Civil War contributed several features to the mosaic of American civil religion. National cemeteries were created to cope with the large numbers of dead. The national holiday

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<sup>66</sup> Howe, Julia Ward. *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, originally published in the Atlantic Monthly, February 1862.

<sup>67</sup> Phillips, Kevin. *American Theocracy*, New York: Penguin Books, 2006, 143.

known as Memorial Day was created. Even now, Memorial Day can involve entire communities in “a rededication to the martyred dead, to the spirit of sacrifice, and to the American vision.”<sup>68</sup> Thanksgiving was formally established as a national holiday during the Lincoln presidency. While Thanksgiving integrates the family unit into civil religion, Memorial Day seeks to operate on the community level.<sup>69</sup> As immigration increased diversity, that diversity affected domestic political pressures and their concomitant foreign policy issues. Immigration of Catholics and Jews from Eastern and Southern Europe made the most significant changes to the American religious landscape. Intellectual challenges from Darwinian evolution and biblical criticism began to bring about changes that would solidify into liberal and fundamentalist divisions within American Protestantism.<sup>70</sup>

U.S. foreign policy and strategy continued to show signs of religious influence during the Progressive Era. President Roosevelt spoke regularly of ‘righteousness.’<sup>71</sup> President Wilson was a theologically liberal Presbyterian. Both were willing to use the military instrument overseas. When the First World War began in 1914, both President Wilson and Secretary of State Bryan were Presbyterians convinced that the United States had a special mission in the world. Their different responses to the crisis of their day are illustrative of the different ways that American religion influences U.S. foreign policy. Secretary of State Bryan believed that it was his Christian duty to help bring about world peace. Bryan designed several treaties to try to avoid war. He celebrated some of these treaties by melting swords, which he had fashioned into plowshares. In 1915, Secretary Bryan resigned because he believed that President Wilson was not truly

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<sup>68</sup> Bellah, Robert N. ‘Civil Religion in America,’ *Dædalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Winter 1967, Vol. 96, No. 1, pp. 1-21. Available on-line: [http://www.robertbellah.com/articles\\_5.htm](http://www.robertbellah.com/articles_5.htm), retrieved 5 December 2007.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> In its extreme forms, theological liberalism came to emphasize Biblical ethics while accepting evolution, denying original sin, and doubting biblical miracles. Some theological liberals developed a liberal, social gospel. At this same time, Christian Scientists, several Pentecostal Protestant groups, and the International Bible Students' Association (today known as the Jehovah's Witnesses) came into existence.

<sup>71</sup> Ribuffo, Leo. Religion and American Foreign Policy: The Story of a Complex Relationship. *The National Interest*, Summer, 1998.

committed to peace. After U.S. entry into the war, nationally recognized evangelist Billy Sunday hailed American soldiers as "God's grenadiers."<sup>72</sup> The interfaith League of National Unity promoted America's participation in World War I across denominational lines.<sup>73</sup>

It is important to note that World War I influenced American religion more than American religion influenced the War. The war brought about important religious responses U.S. religious responses such as Walter Rauschenbusch's social gospel and the beginning of a militant, anti-modernist movement that would come to be known as Christian fundamentalism.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps the single most important change to American religion was the emergence among theological conservatives of the doctrine known as pre-millennial dispensationalism.

The intent to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine as expressed in the Balfour Declaration and ratified by the League of Nations significantly energized pre-millennial thinking and laid the foundation for an eventual religious co-optation of U.S. foreign policy. It is important to note that the publication of *The Scofield Bible*, World War I and the Balfour Declaration can be directly correlated with a significant rise in numbers and influence between two American religious groups with significant roles in American political life today: the Southern Baptists and the Assemblies of God. Between the two World Wars, Southern Baptists added 1.5 million members and the Assemblies of God increased their numbers four-fold.<sup>75</sup> The philosophy of dispensational pre-millennialism and the attendant world events offer the best explanation for the phenomenal growth of these two groups and laid the foundation for post-World War II revival among evangelicals and the subsequent rise to political power in the 1980s.

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<sup>72</sup> Ribuffo, Leo. Religion and American Foreign Policy: The Story of a Complex Relationship. *The National Interest*, Summer, 1998.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Brasher, Brenda. "Thoughts on the Status of the Cyborg: On Technological Socialization and Its Link to the Religious Function of Popular Culture," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 64, Issue 4, 1996, pp. 809-830. Available on-line: <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=404>, retrieved 27 December 2007.

<sup>75</sup> Phillips, Kevin. *American Theocracy*, New York: Penguin Books, 2006, 114-115.



## ISRAEL, NUCLEAR WAR AND THE LAST DAYS

"Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.' For the LORD has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him"... Thus says the LORD: "Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work, declares the LORD, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your future, declares the LORD, and your children shall come back to their own country."  
*Jeremiah 35:10-17*

World War II was important because it appeared to put into place the conditions and potentialities that American pre-millennialists had been searching for: Israel, significant threats from Russia and China, and, for the first time ever, a tangible, literal method by which humanity could be destroyed by fire in the twinkling of an eye – nuclear weapons. The impacts on American policy and culture were immediate with the end of isolationism and revival among conservative Protestants.<sup>76</sup> After World War II, isolationism was no longer considered viable and the debate centered not on whether the United States should engage internationally, but rather how the country should go about it.<sup>77</sup> National religious revival renewed the impulse to carry out mission work, especially overseas, which had significant implications for U.S. foreign policy. The extent of the influence is easy to demonstrate by invoking the name of Billy Graham. No one in America could ignore the importance of Graham's ability to draw huge crowds, some numbering 50,000, from coast to coast.<sup>78</sup> The influence was important within government as Christian realist Niebuhr became influential in the opening days of the Cold War and influenced the thinking of George F. Kennan, the author of containment.<sup>79</sup> President Eisenhower's denouncement of "Godless Communism" resonated strongly with the majority of Americans.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ribuffo, Leo. *Religion and American Foreign Policy: The Story of a Complex Relationship. The National Interest*, Summer, 1998.

<sup>77</sup> Internationalists ranged from publisher Henry Luce, the son of missionaries in China, who envisioned an "American Century," to former Vice President Henry A. Wallace, a social gospel advocate who promoted a "century of the common man."

<sup>78</sup> Phillips, Kevin. *American Theocracy*, New York: Penguin Books, 2006, 115.

<sup>79</sup> Ribuffo, Leo. *Religion and American Foreign Policy: The Story of a Complex Relationship. The National Interest*, Summer, 1998.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

In the minds of American dispensational pre-millennialists, the beginning of the Cold War initiated the beginning of the prophesied 'last days' with two key developments: the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 and the invention and the proliferation of nuclear weapons.<sup>81</sup> Pre-millennialists in America have come to agree that the establishment of the state of Israel fulfilled their interpretation of chapter 24 in the *Gospel of Matthew*. This passage is significant for pre-millennialists because they read it as a key to understanding the 'end times' that will hasten the end of the world. The passage adjures followers to watch for signs, which would include wars, rumors of wars, false Christs, and the renewal of the fig tree, which is a symbol of Israel. Most pre-millennialists believe that based on this passage, some who were alive in 1948 will live to see the Second Coming.<sup>82</sup>

The formal recognition by the United States of Israel in 1948 is an important study in the influence of religion on United States policy-making. United States foreign policy toward Israel and the second and third order effects of that policy can be difficult to explain or predict using traditional political science models and methods. Dr. Ribuffo suggests that the recognition of Israel is the result of "grassroots lobbying."<sup>83</sup> It is important to note that diplomatic and military advisors recommended against recognition and oil companies lobbied hard against supporting Israel with formal recognition.<sup>84</sup> Some of President Truman's decision may still be explained in terms of rational policymaking.<sup>85</sup> American Jews had some political power as a voting bloc and the President probably wanted to minimize Soviet influence in Israel. Most importantly, however,

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<sup>81</sup> Leopold, Todd. Between God and a Hard Place, *CNN.com*, 16 November 2000. Available on-line: <http://archives.cnn.com/2000/books/news/11/16/end.of.days/index.html>, retrieved 2 November 2007.

<sup>82</sup> Bruce, Steve. 'Y2K, The Apocalypse, and Evangelical Christianity: The Role of Eschatological Belief in Church Responses,' *Sociology of Religion*, Summer 2001, 4. Available on-line: [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0SOR/is\\_2\\_62/ai\\_76759009/pg\\_3](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0SOR/is_2_62/ai_76759009/pg_3), retrieved 27 December 2007.

<sup>83</sup> Ribuffo, Leo. Religion and American Foreign Policy: The Story of a Complex Relationship. *The National Interest*, Summer, 1998.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Additional considerations include sympathy for Holocaust victims and nativist desires to provide a destination other than the United States for Jewish refugees.

Zionists found themselves with Christian allies who believed that the "regathering" of Jews in the Holy Land fulfilled dispensational pre-millennialist Bible prophecy.<sup>86</sup>

With a broad foundation built during post-World War II revival, the Christian right began to form as a political force after Barry Goldwater's failed bid for the Presidency in 1964. As a backlash against secular liberalism, the Christian right found much to admire in the conservative agenda of deregulation and smaller government.<sup>87</sup> The movement gained momentum following the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, which evangelical conservatives and Catholics found particularly troubling.<sup>88</sup> Within four months of the *Roe v. Wade* decision the National Right to Life Committee was formed. Other organizations such as Concerned Women for America, Focus on the Family and the Eagle Forum quickly followed. Sustained by this momentum, the political apparatus of the Christian right has grown so that "the connections among the boardrooms, petroleum clubs, and conservative preachers are well established" in the southern and mountain states.<sup>89</sup> One prominent example is the work of Joseph Coors who worked during the 1970s and 1980s to found and fund Republican business-religious groups such as the Heritage Foundation and Mountain States Legal Foundation. Coors worked closely with preacher and *Left Behind* author Tim LaHaye to found the Council for National Policy. Coors also funded the Coalition on Revival<sup>90</sup>, which works to unify Christian political action by attempting to bridge differences between dispensational pre-millennialists and post-millennialists.<sup>91</sup> The influence of these organizations on the highest levels of government is easy to demonstrate: no fewer than four of

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<sup>86</sup> Ribuffo, Leo. Religion and American Foreign Policy: The Story of a Complex Relationship. *The National Interest*, Summer, 1998.

<sup>87</sup> Kaplan, Esther. *With God on Their Side: How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy, and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House*. New York: The New Press, 2004, 71.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 131.

<sup>89</sup> Phillips, Kevin. *American Theocracy*, New York: Penguin Books, 2006, 64.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, 65.

<sup>91</sup> Many post-millennialists in America prefer to refer to themselves as Reconstructionists.

President Reagan's cabinet secretaries held prominent positions in either Mountain States Legal Foundation or the Council for National Policy before joining the Reagan administration.<sup>92</sup>

In 1976, the two major political parties nominated Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter, both of whom were known for their religiosity. Some have characterized the 1976 election as a backlash against too little evidence of religious conformity at the highest levels of government. A well-known theologian at the time, Albert Outler, argued that religious Americans "want a society ruled by those who know what the Word of God is. The technical name for that is 'theocracy,' and their Napoleon, whether he likes it or not, is Jimmy Carter."<sup>93</sup> 1976 marks an important point in time where we begin to see remarkable consistency in terms of foreign policy across parties and administrations. Like his predecessor, President Ford, President Carter sought to promote human rights and mediate a Middle East peace. During the 1970s, significant numbers of Jews began to shift to the right<sup>94</sup> of the American political spectrum and critics of détente were often motivated by concerns for Jewish emigration.<sup>95</sup>

The Christian right was widely recognized as a powerful political force in 1980 when President Carter's fellow southern evangelicals and other Christians abandoned him in favor of Ronald Reagan.<sup>96</sup> For many Christians, President Carter's diplomatic and military humility was the wrong approach for solving problems around the world.<sup>97</sup> Although not known for his own, personal religious credentials, President Reagan clearly understood the role of the religious right in his own rise to power. In his first substantive meeting with the Soviet ambassador, President

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<sup>92</sup> Phillips, Kevin. *American Theocracy*, New York: Penguin Books, 2006, 64.

<sup>93</sup> Outler, Albert quoted in Gerson, Michael. A 2nd Home for Religious Voters?, *Real Clear Politics*, 2 November 2007. Available on-line: [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2007/11/democrats\\_and\\_religious\\_voters.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2007/11/democrats_and_religious_voters.html), retrieved on 2 November 2007.

<sup>94</sup> President Carter received the smallest percentage of Jewish votes for any Democrat since the 1920s.

<sup>95</sup> Ribuffo, Leo. Religion and American Foreign Policy: The Story of a Complex Relationship. *The National Interest*, Summer, 1998. The Jackson-Vanik Amendment was designed to pressure the Soviet Union into increasing Jewish emigration.

<sup>96</sup> Kaplan, Esther. *With God on Their Side: How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy, and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House*. New York: The New Press, 2004, 71.

Reagan raised the issue of Russian Pentecostals living in asylum in the U.S. embassy in Moscow and quickly secured permission for them to emigrate. In spite of nearly two decades of détente, President Reagan resumed the practice of denouncing the Soviet Union as atheistic evil. The 1980s saw the trend of Protestant theological conservatives favoring hawkishness continue in way that combined foreign policy, domestic policy and religious doctrine into an ever widening chasm separating liberals and conservatives – and perhaps galvanizing and radicalizing both groups along the way. While conservatives may have been more philosophically inclined to use military more or act in interventionist ways, they did not set forth an agenda of suggested expeditions. It is important to note that theologically conservative Protestants sided with Reagan primarily because they concluded that Democrats would not pursue their agenda on issues as abortion, homosexuality, and school prayer. Conservatives did not have an elaborate foreign policy agenda with one important exception: a non-negotiable, theologically based commitment to Israel from which all other foreign policy considerations devolved.

The Council for National Policy<sup>98</sup> is an important example of religious influence on policy making that operates independently of the larger American electorate. Founded in 1981 by dispensational pre-millennialist Tim LaHaye, the Council for National Policy operates largely in secret and serves to ally religious and corporate conservatives.<sup>99</sup> Today, the Christian Coalition is a mature, well-funded umbrella organization with hundreds of local and national membership

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<sup>97</sup> Ribuffo, Leo. Religion and American Foreign Policy: The Story of a Complex Relationship. *The National Interest*, Summer, 1998.

<sup>98</sup> According to its web site, the Council for National Policy is “an educational foundation organized under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. We do not lobby Congress, support candidates, or issue public policy statements on controversial issues. Our over 600 members include many of our nation’s leaders from the fields of government, business, the media, religion, and the professions. Our members are united in their belief in a free enterprise system, a strong national defense, and support for traditional western values. They meet to share the best information available on national and world problems, know one another on a personal basis, and collaborate in achieving their shared goals.” Available on-line: <http://www.policycounsel.org/24508.html>, retrieved 12 November 2007.

<sup>99</sup> Kaplan, Esther. *With God on Their Side: How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy, and Democracy in George W. Bush’s White House*. New York: The New Press, 2004, 74.

organizations.<sup>100</sup> It features extensive radio and television efforts reaching audiences numbering in the tens of millions, think tanks, political action committees and lobbies. The Christian right has focused considerable effort on the Republican Party. In 2002, a survey found that in 44 states Christian conservatives controlled 25% or more of the votes within the state Republican Party and had outright control in 18 states.<sup>101</sup> This has facilitated extraordinary access and control over the national platform.

During the 1984 election, the shift in American politics became even clearer. The official platform of the Democratic Party stated that abortion was a fundamental right.<sup>102</sup> Walter Mondale, the Democratic nominee, criticized the influence of religious conservatives in the Republican Party. Throughout the Reagan and Bush administrations the times became closer and easier to discern. President George Bush invited Billy Graham to spend the night at the White House on the eve of the Gulf War in 1991.<sup>103</sup> President Bush's ubiquitous invocations of God prompted some Muslims to complain that he was leading a religious war against Islam itself, rather than a limited effort to roll back the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.<sup>104</sup>

This clear alignment has held true in recent elections where more than 66% of religious conservatives voted for President Bush and about 75% of self-identified secular Americans supported Democratic candidates.<sup>105</sup> In assessing the 2004 Presidential elections, political analyst Bill Moyers attributed President Bush's victory to "many who have made the apocalypse a powerful driving force in modern American politics...the invasion of Iraq was for them a warm-

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 72-73.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>102</sup> Gerson, Michael. A 2nd Home for Religious Voters?, *Real Clear Politics*, 2 November 2007. Available on-line: [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2007/11/democrats\\_and\\_religious\\_voters.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2007/11/democrats_and_religious_voters.html), retrieved on 2 November 2007.

<sup>103</sup> Ribuffo, Leo. Religion and American Foreign Policy: The Story of a Complex Relationship. *The National Interest*, Summer, 1998.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Gerson, Michael. A 2nd Home for Religious Voters?, *Real Clear Politics*, 2 November 2007. Available on-line: [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2007/11/democrats\\_and\\_religious\\_voters.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2007/11/democrats_and_religious_voters.html), retrieved on 2 November 2007.

up act, predicted in the Book of Revelation...war with Islam in the Middle East is not something to be feared but welcomed – an essential conflagration on the road to redemption.”<sup>106</sup>

## CONTEMPORARY PRE-MILLENNIALISM IN THE AMERICAN ELECTORATE

"This Republican Party of Lincoln has become a party of theocracy." – U.S. Representative Christopher Shays (R-CT), 23 March 2005<sup>107</sup>

In any effort to use religious factors to analyze American foreign policy, numerous considerations serve to confuse and diminish the effectiveness of any proposal. Protestant majorities notwithstanding, there are significant Catholic and Jewish blocs. Protestantism itself resists coherent analysis with its innumerable and sometimes incomprehensible divisions. It is increasingly clear that Americans are capable of perceiving a number of different policy positions within the Bible and theories of interpretation continue to multiply exponentially in an increasingly complex religious landscape. This plurality of religious views notwithstanding, Gerson has correctly surmised, “America is moving toward the development of one secular party and one religious party...a danger to democracy. This trend turns nearly every political disagreement into a culture-war conflict. When the sides view each other as infidels or ayatollahs, it adds jet fuel to the normal combustion of American politics.”<sup>108</sup>

Most importantly, policy is also the result of secular concerns such as economic advantage and survival of the state. The impact of religion is best understood as operating in two distinct ways. First, religion provides a worldview and a cultural resource, which we draw upon to explain events around us and shape preferences of which we may or may not be aware. J.R.

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<sup>106</sup> Moyers, Bill quoted in Phillips, Kevin. *American Theocracy*, New York: Penguin Books, 2006, 68.

<sup>107</sup> Shays, Christopher quoted in Adam Nagourney. ‘G.O.P. Right Is Splintered on Schiavo Intervention,’ *New York Times*, 23 March 2005. Available on-line: [http://www.theocracywatch.org/terri\\_conservatives\\_times\\_mar23\\_05.htm](http://www.theocracywatch.org/terri_conservatives_times_mar23_05.htm), retrieved on: 19 January 2008.

Dunn asserts that “religious belief is hard-wired into human beings, by what means and for what purposes we don't yet understand.”<sup>109</sup> Secondly, we do consciously pursue a religious agenda, but only after we have addressed the traditional strategic, economic, and political considerations of statecraft. Murchison would argue against my analysis here by stating the “ultimate nature of religious concerns -- heaven, hell, death, judgment -- makes them easily eclipse managerial questions like budgetary "earmarks" and deficits in health insurance coverage.”<sup>110</sup>

In understanding the actual and potential impact of religion on politics, some effort should be made to understand where the electorate stands. America has a degree of religious pluralism that is unrivaled in the world. There are so many denominations that no single group comprises more than 40% of total adherents.<sup>111</sup> Phillips uses a wide variety of polls and surveys over time to conclude that about 25% of Americans are affiliated with either a fundamentalist, evangelical, holiness or Pentecostal Protestant church.<sup>112</sup> The two largest denominations in America, the Southern Baptists and the Assemblies of God, are in this group. This 25% of American adults are the bedrock of dispensational pre-millennialism in America. Phillips analysis suggests that about 15% of Americans are associated with one of the older Protestant denominations that would be considered mainstream Protestants.<sup>113</sup> While these groups do not necessarily espouse dispensational pre-millennialism in any formal sense, analysis suggests that some of their members are amenable to the ideas of pre-millennialism.

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<sup>108</sup> Gerson, Michael. A 2nd Home for Religious Voters?, *Real Clear Politics*, 2 November 2007. Available on-line: [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2007/11/democrats\\_and\\_religious\\_voters.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2007/11/democrats_and_religious_voters.html), retrieved on 2 November 2007.

<sup>109</sup> Dunn, J.R. A Necessary Apocalypse, *Real Clear Politics*, 2 February 2007. Available on-line: [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2007/02/a\\_necessary\\_apocalypse.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2007/02/a_necessary_apocalypse.html), retrieved on 2 November 2007.

<sup>110</sup> Murchison, William. Fall of the Religious Right?, *Real Clear Politics*, 30 October 2007. Available on-line: [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2007/10/fall\\_of\\_the\\_religious\\_right.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2007/10/fall_of_the_religious_right.html), retrieved 2 November 2007.

<sup>111</sup> Wald, Kenneth D. *Religion and Politics in the United States*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1992, 19.

<sup>112</sup> Phillips, Kevin. *American Theocracy*, New York: Penguin Books, 2006, 119.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, 119.



Based on conservative demographics, Phillips convincingly shows that the trend over time is that more than 40% of Americans recognize and draw upon some form of apocalypticism in their interpretation of world events and their subsequent exercise of individual and group political influence.<sup>114</sup> Not surprisingly, the influence of apocalypticism is most significant when considering issues such as the Middle East, Israel, oil production stability, natural disasters, and epidemics such as HIV/AIDS.<sup>115</sup> This is the best explanation for the results of surveys showing that between 33% and 40% of Americans interpret world events in accordance with the philosophy of dispensational pre-millennialism.

Phillips use of demographics is highly credible and enlightening, but may underestimate the influence of apocalypticism on Americans and their policy making. Phillips, in the interest of accuracy, employed the lowest range of numbers and probably undercounted to some degree, but this is a minor point. His data reveals important dynamics at work. The polling data on apocalypticism can only reconcile to demographic data if all mainstream Protestants (15 per cent of American adults) are included with the fundamentalist-evangelical-Pentecostal category (25 per cent of American adults), which is almost certainly not the case based on their stated beliefs and voting patterns. Additionally, hints of apocalyptic thinking are shown in higher numbers by polls with less specific questions. For example, a poll conducted by Princeton Research Associates for the Pew Research Center showed that 44 per cent of Americans believe Jesus Christ will likely return to Earth within the next 50 years.<sup>116</sup> Additionally, these numbers undervalue the effect of religion on conservative politics in some important ways: at least one million Mormon voters, one million Jehovah's Witness voters, and one million Christian Restoration voters are not counted and the numbers under-represent Pentecostals by perhaps as

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 88.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 68.

<sup>116</sup> Nettleton, Steve. *Apostles of the Apocalypse: Are We Ready for the End?*, *CNN.com*, 24 December 1999. Available on-line: <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/1999/at2000/stories/religion/>, retrieved on 2 November 2007.

many as ten million adults. While these groups, less the under-counted Pentecostals, are not motivated by apocalypticism, their votes and broad consensus on other issues add to the impression of a coherent religious right mandate. In the end, Phillips himself concluded that the best way to describe the role of religion in American politics and war was as “widely underestimated.”<sup>117</sup>

The best way to reconcile the empirical demographics with the polling data is by acknowledging millennialism as a powerful cultural resource and American worldview. As a cultural resource and worldview, the philosophy may exist only at the conceptual level, devoid of the elaborate details associated with full-fledged dispensational pre-millennialism. Of the almost half of American adults potentially operating through this paradigm, more than half come from the fundamentalist-evangelical-Pentecostal category and employ dispensational pre-millennialism in a conscious and deliberate way. Less than half of the group, or about one in five Americans, while influenced by an apocalyptic worldview, probably does not employ it in a conscious or deliberate fashion and likely lacks the specialized vocabulary associated with dispensational pre-millennialism. This is significant because even those who consider themselves non-religious or religious, but decidedly non-millennialist, may not be free of these influences in their thinking.

The ideas of dispensational pre-millennialism have crossed the boundaries to varying degrees of most major Protestant denominations.<sup>118</sup> Many Americans are influenced by the philosophy of dispensational pre-millennialism and have developed an apocalyptic worldview without being consciously aware of it.<sup>119</sup> The polling data and demographics suggest that the range varies over time and is best explained by the intensity of world events and perceived danger felt by Americans. Americans are vulnerable to apocalyptic interpretations of world events

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<sup>117</sup> Phillips, Kevin. *American Theocracy*, New York: Penguin Books, 2006, 121.

<sup>118</sup> Sarver, Mark. Dispensationalism: Part I - Millennial Views Prior to the Rise of Dispensationalism, *Grace On-line Library*. Available on-line: <http://www.graceonlinelibrary.org/articles/full.asp?id=9|21|653>, retrieved 29 December 2007.

emanating throughout American culture and media. By adopting the geopolitical vision of dispensational pre-millennialism Americans have developed a shared framework through which they interpret and understand world events, which enhances knowledge retention and overall interest in certain world events with pre-millennial relevance.<sup>120</sup> Prior to 9/11, but a month before the year 2000 arrived, a Princeton Research Associates poll conducted for *Newsweek* found 40 per cent of Americans believed the world would end with the battle of Armageddon as described in the *Book of Revelation*.<sup>121</sup> It is in this sense that pre-millennialism functions as an underlying cultural resource even for Americans who do not formally embrace the particular theology or belong to one of the groups identified with pre-millennialism. In other words, I would suggest that in times of intense crisis we should expect to see 40 to 45 per cent of American adults interpret world events apocalyptically while the steady state number will hover around 33 per cent in times of relative peace.

It is next important to understand the extent to which religious beliefs transfer to or manifest in the form of political action. Religious affiliation and involvement often indicates a high level of “community attachment that translates into concern for public affairs.”<sup>122</sup> The complexity of the American political system provides numerous avenues of action and levels of government to act upon. These include legislative, administrative and judicial actions at the local, state and federal levels. Perhaps the most important point is that more Americans belong to

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<sup>119</sup> Nettleton, Steve. Apostles of the Apocalypse: Are We Ready for the End?, *CNN.com*, 24 December 1999. Available on-line: <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/1999/at2000/stories/religion/>, retrieved on 2 November 2007.

<sup>120</sup> Dittmer, Jason. ‘Of Gog and Magog: The Geopolitical Visions of Jack Chick and Premillennial Dispensationalism,’ *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 6(2), 297, Statesboro, Georgia: Georgia Southern University, 2007. Available on-line: <http://www.acme-journal.org/vol6/JDi.pdf>, retrieved on 10 December 2007.

<sup>121</sup> Nettleton, Steve. Apostles of the Apocalypse: Are We Ready for the End?, *CNN.com*, 24 December 1999. Available on-line: <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/1999/at2000/stories/religion/>, retrieved on 2 November 2007.

<sup>122</sup> Wald, Kenneth D. *Religion and Politics in the United States*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1992, 36.

religious organizations than to any other voluntary organization, therefore politicians will always be ready to listen.

## CONTEMPORARY PRE-MILLENNIALISM AND AMERICAN CULTURE

“I don’t think it surprises me. I think Hollywood ought to reflect a mixture of the culture and that’s certainly a huge element of American culture.” Tom Selleck, commenting on the success of a feature film dealing entirely with *Bible* prophecy at the world premiere of *Left Behind* at the Director’s Guild of America in Los Angeles, California, February 2, 2001.<sup>123</sup>

The influence of millennialism in America may be demonstrated in a number of ways. According to Boyer, “what we see in contemporary American mass culture really is that apocalyptic belief has become big business...a kind of synergistic process where a successful televangelist will publish a book which is successful, which will then spin off into videotapes and movies and sometimes prophecy magazines, and even we have bumper stickers and wristwatches and other kinds of material, all of which reinforce popular belief and interest in Bible prophecy.”<sup>124</sup> The books, articles, television shows, radio programs and movies centered on pre-millennialism are too numerous by far to catalogue or discuss here. There are, however, some works that are notable for the extraordinary impact on American culture and policy.

Dispensational pre-millennialism has spread quickly throughout the U.S. during the last 100 years, greatly aided by the 1909 *Scofield Reference Bible* and its subsequent editions. In the U.S. today, dispensational pre-millennialism is taught at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Dallas Theological Seminary, and more than 200 other lesser-known Bible institutes. It is regularly promoted by television evangelists such as Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, John Hagee, and Jack Van Impe.

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<sup>123</sup> Selleck, Tom quoted in Cloud Ten Pictures’ *Left Behind*, special features section of the digital video disc directed by Vic Sarin, 2001.

<sup>124</sup> Boyer, Paul. ‘Apocalypticism Explained: America’s Doom Industry,’ *Frontline*, originally broadcast on 22 November 1998, available on-line: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/explanation/doomindustry.html>, retrieved 6 November 2007.

The influence of Hal Lindsey's 1970 *Late, Great Planet Earth* cannot be overstated. It was the top-selling non-fiction work in the U.S. for the entire decade of the 1970s.<sup>125</sup> Lindsey's book was theologically identical to Darby's dispensational pre-millennialism. Lindsey drew upon contemporary geo-politics and assigned literal correlations within the *Book of Revelation* for the Cold War, nuclear weapons, rivalry with China, and, most importantly, the establishment of the state of Israel and that country's recent capture of Jerusalem in the Six Days War. The first three chapters explain Lindsey's ideas on *Bible* prophecy and chapter three is devoted to our need to take immediate action in light of Lindsey's predictions. Chapter explains how Israel, under the system of dispensational pre-millennialism, continues today as God's 'chosen people' the defense of which is of paramount importance. Chapter five is titled 'Russia is a Gog' and identifies Russia as the principle antagonist in the Battle of Armageddon. Chapter six discusses the threat from various Middle Eastern states and Iran, while chapter seven is devoted to the threat posed by China. Chapters eight, nine and ten set forth Lindsey's assertion that the Anti-Christ is coming to power in the form of the Trilateral Commission, now the European Union.

Lindsey was instrumental in moving dispensational pre-millennialism beyond the 25 per cent of the American population in the fundamental-evangelical-Pentecostal demographic and into the mainstream consciousness. Perhaps more importantly, Lindsey's broader popular appeal quickly translated into access and influence at the highest levels of the U.S. government. During the 1970s, he lectured at the Pentagon and the National War College. During the Reagan administration, he was a consultant to both the Departments of State and Defense.

In 1996, a leading dispensational pre-millennialist, Tim LaHaye, launched a series of books known collectively as the "*Left Behind*" series. The series has sold more than 50 million copies and in the last decade has only been outperformed by the *Harry Potter* books. While technically a work of fiction, many Americans consider the books an important guide to

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

understanding world events. The story is at times more like LaHaye's commentary on the *Book of Revelation*: it begins with the Rapture, has a great deal of geo-political analysis of the Anti-Christ (which LaHaye clearly associates with the European Union and the United Nations), and features the Battle of Armageddon prominently.

It is important to remember that Tim LaHaye is much more than an amazingly successful fiction author. LaHaye co-founded the Council for National Policy and since the early 1980s has been a close confidante and advisor to conservative Presidents and policy makers. When Jack Kemp ran for president in 1988, LaHaye initially served as his campaign chair.

Lindsey's *The Late, Great Planet Earth* and LaHaye's *Left Behind* series are hardly the only examples of cultural manifestations of apocalypticism. As with straightforward religious commentators such as Lindsey and LaHaye, nuclear war is most often associated with apocalypse in culture. Prominent examples include *The Day After* and *On the Beach*. Dispensational premillennialism offers much more than just nuclear war, however, and these other considerations have made their mark on American culture as well. *The Seventh Sign* starring Demi Moore attempted the most literal reading of the symbols in *Revelation* that is probably possible. Stephen King replaced nuclear war with biological warfare in *The Stand*. The blockbuster movie titled *Armageddon* starring Bruce Willis and the very similar *Deep Impact* starring Morgan Freeman both featured cataclysmic meteors. Another product of apocalypticism in American culture is the idea of extraterrestrial intervention and threats such as those portrayed in Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *Independence Day*.

Dr. John C. Hagee is the founder and leader of Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas, a non-denominational evangelical church with more than 18,000 active members. Dr. Hagee also heads John Hagee Ministries, which telecasts his radio and television programs on

160 television stations, 50 radio stations, and eight networks in the United States.<sup>126</sup> His media presence is only one indicator of Hagee's influence. He has hosted events attended by notable persons such as Senators Lieberman and McCain and opened with personal letters of greeting from President Bush. Hagee points to *Genesis* 12:3 as "God's foreign policy statement":<sup>127</sup> "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse."<sup>128</sup> Hagee sees this as an inviolable requirement to "protect and defend Israel at all costs."<sup>129</sup> There are three prominent policy implications that appear throughout Hagee's media messages. First, Iran is an immediate threat. Second, there must be "one Jerusalem."<sup>130</sup> Third, war is part of God's plan.

Lindsey, LaHaye and Hagee are representative of the vast cultural and governmental influences of pre-millennialism. In his book, *Israel's Final Holocaust*, Jack Van Impe, founder of one of the world's largest evangelical Christian ministries devoted to prophecy, applies an almost literal view of Revelation to a modern context. "Following the defeat of Russia and her armies by Israel, the final world dictator, the Antichrist, will be revealed for who he is -- a ruthless, satanically controlled, evil person," Van Impe writes. "The length of his reign after the Israeli defeat of Russia will be three and one-half (forty-two months; see Rev. 13:5) and during that time he will bring the world to its most violent hour."<sup>131</sup> James Dobson is the founder and chairman of Focus on the Family which is a Christian media powerhouse. Tony Perkins heads the Washington, D.C. Family Research Council, which is closely linked to Focus on the Family. The pre-millennialist camp includes well known political operatives like former presidential candidate

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<sup>126</sup> John Hagee Ministries. Pastor Hagee. Retrieved from <http://www.jhm.org/pastor.asp> on 4 September 2007. Hagee's show is weekly. In addition to the United States, it is seen Canada, Africa, Europe, Australia, New Zealand and several Third World nations. Hagee is a prolific author with ten major published works and several best-sellers.

<sup>127</sup> Hagee, John. Quoted in Cable News Network's *God's Christian Warriors*. Television broadcast on 23 August 2007.

<sup>128</sup> The Holy Bible, *Genesis* 12:3, English Standard Version. Crossway Publishers, 2001.

<sup>129</sup> Hagee, John. Quoted in Cable News Network's *God's Christian Warriors*. Television broadcast on 23 August 2007.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

Gary Bauer and Ralph Reed, the “brash Evangelical who transformed the Christian Coalition into a populist power center, then helped usher Republicans into control of Congress and George W. Bush into the presidency.”<sup>132</sup> Were it not for the Abramoff scandal, Reed would likely be the governor of Georgia preparing for his own presidential run in 2012. Reed is more adept at policy than theology, but his Assembly of God credentials place him squarely in the dispensational pre-millennialist camp.

While the psychological make-up of the American population is significant for its impact, it pales in comparison to the importance of the thinking of senior leaders and policy makers.

While the fundamentalist-evangelical-Pentecostal group is about one-quarter of the population at large, their representation at the senior levels of the United States government is domineering. For example, in 1996, the President, Vice-President, Senate President pro tem, and Speaker of the House were all Southern Baptists.<sup>133</sup> Senator James Inhofe, a Republican from Oklahoma, stated, “I don’t believe there is a single issue we deal with in government that hasn’t been dealt with in the Scriptures.”<sup>134</sup> Senator Inhofe is widely known to be a devout believer in dispensational pre-millennialism. While serving as House Majority leader, Representative Tom DeLay, a Republican from Texas, kept a poster on the wall of office that read “This could be the day” in reference to the Rapture and initiation of the Great Tribulation and Armageddon.<sup>135</sup>

Other sources of governmental and policy influence are important as well. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the religious right established numerous groups to aid in the advancement of their agenda. Prominent among these were Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority founded in 1979

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<sup>131</sup> Van Impe, Jack quoted in Nettleton, Steve. *Apostles of the Apocalypse: Are We Ready for the End?*, *CNN.com*, 24 December 1999. Available on-line: <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/1999/at2000/stories/religion/>, retrieved on 2 November 2007.

<sup>132</sup> Carney, James. *The Rise and Fall of Ralph Reed*, *Time*, 23 July 2006, available on-line: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1218060,00.html>, retrieved 9 November 2007.

<sup>133</sup> President Clinton, Vice-President Gore, Senator Thurmond and Speaker Gingrich.

<sup>134</sup> Inhofe, James quoted in Phillips, Kevin. *American Theocracy*, New York: Penguin Books, 2006, 96.

<sup>135</sup> Phillips, Kevin. *American Theocracy*, New York: Penguin Books, 2006, 96.



and Tim LaHaye's Council for National Policy founded in 1981. The Moral Majority has since been improved upon by the Christian Coalition.

Dispensational pre-millennialism and its attendant apocalyptic worldview will have numerous foreign policy and security implications for the United States in years to come. In general, collective anxiety over things like world-ending war, the Anti-Christ, and the need to secure our eternal destiny by our own hand will add to strategic hubris, justify increasingly reckless international action, and continue to over-commit the military in ways the Nation cannot afford. The issue is made immeasurably more difficult because we cannot seem to discuss the role of apocalypticism in foreign policy publicly. Instead, we have developed a type of civic religion where Presidents and other policy makers use thinly coded phrases to "heighten biblical resonance"<sup>136</sup> for that portion of the population that requires it. To everyone else, the remarks seem an appropriate and normal part of how the United States government communicates. One of the challenges for any administration is how to send "these private or sub-rosa" signals to millennially-minded Christians without appearing overtly bigoted or intolerant.<sup>137</sup> The inevitability of millennial peace through redemptive violence and an exceptional role for America have been and continue to be powerful themes running throughout the security and foreign policies of the U.S.<sup>138</sup> Official U.S. government policy expresses these themes in a number of ways from the National seal that reads *Novus Ordo Seclorum* – the New Order for the Ages – or the nuclear intercontinental ballistic missile known as the Peacekeeper.

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 239.

<sup>137</sup> Kaplan, Esther. *With God on Their Side: How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy, and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House*. New York: The New Press, 2004, 79.

<sup>138</sup> Dittmer, Jason. 'Of Gog and Magog: The Geopolitical Visions of Jack Chick and Premillennial Dispensationalism,' *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 6(2), pp. 278-303, Statesboro, Georgia: Georgia Southern University, 2007, 296-297.

## THE HOLY LAND AND ARMAGEDDON: U.S. POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

“It is apparent, in light of the rebirth of the state of Israel, that the present-day events in the Holy Land may very well serve as a prelude or forerunner to the future Battle of Armageddon and the glorious return of Jesus Christ.” – Jerry Falwell, 22 July 2006<sup>139</sup>

Since the 1970s, American foreign policy in the Middle East has centered on two principal areas of concern: the stability of oil-producing states and the Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>140</sup> Using the 1979 Iranian revolution as a paradigmatic lens, American policy makers tend to see Islamic opposition as the main threat to success.<sup>141</sup> At the heart of U.S. government foreign policy is the singular fact that pre-millennial dispensationalists see support of Israel as being equivalent to supporting God. This steadfast support is “baffling for Jews, annoying to Arabs, and unavoidable for American Congressmen.”<sup>142</sup> It would be difficult to explain American security policy in the Middle East without a religious analysis such as suggested herein. When exploring the pro-Israeli lobby, many would look to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, or AIPAC, but the truth is that evangelical Christian support is significantly larger and more influential.<sup>143</sup> According to former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, when dealing with foreign policy in the Middle East “religious convictions transcend any consideration of fairness.”<sup>144</sup> Fields suggests that action premised on Bible prophecy imparts the best explanatory power to American foreign policy when she states “if we could bind together all the rhetoric over the Middle East, it would fit neatly into the Old Testament's Book of Jeremiah. Beware, beware,

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<sup>139</sup> Falwell, Jerry. ‘On the Threshold of Armageddon?’ *World NetDaily.com*, 22 July 2006. Available on-line: [http://worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=51180](http://worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=51180), retrieved 4 January 2008.

<sup>140</sup> Gerges, Fawaz A. *America and Political Islam*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 12.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>142</sup> North, Gary. ‘The Unannounced Reason Behind American Fundamentalism's Support for the State of Israel,’ 19 July 2000. Available on-line: <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article1585.htm>, retrieved 29 December 2007.

<sup>143</sup> Kaplan, Esther. *With God on Their Side: How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy, and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House*. New York: The New Press, 2004, 24.

<sup>144</sup> Albright, Madeleine. *The Mighty and the Almighty*. New York: Harper Collins, 2006, 135.

beware.”<sup>145</sup> Using this analogy, Fields compares influential, mainstream leaders such as Newt Gingrich to the prophet Jeremiah with his contemporary warnings that Israel is threatened by nuclear holocaust and his assertions that this is a direct threat to the U.S.<sup>146</sup> Knowing that pre-millennialists are an important source of political power in the U.S., the Israeli government has begun to refer to the West Bank with Biblical terms such as Judea and Samaria.<sup>147</sup> For many American Christians, any policy that calls for Israel to return any land is dangerous for Israel and contrary to the *Bible*.<sup>148</sup>

Two motivations for support of Israel derive directly from pre-millennialism. First, pre-millennialists equate the contemporary political state of Israel with the Israel of the *Old Testament* and hold them to be God’s chosen people resulting in an obligation to aid them in any way possible. Second, if Israel were removed before the rapture, then the pre-millennialists’ theory of imminent escape from death would be falsified.<sup>149</sup> Pre-millennialists would certainly adapt their theology to provide for an indefinite delay of some sort, but the sway of pre-millennialism over the present generation would be significantly diminished.

It is impossible to explain the policy positions surrounding the Temple Mount in Jerusalem without an understanding of the religious influences, and, more importantly, the apocalyptic import of the site at the crossroads of three religions. The analysis is easy enough for Jews and Moslems; it is the location of the ancient Jewish temples that represent the zenith of Jewish culture and it is the current location of the al-Aqsa mosque containing the Dome of the Rock, which for Moslems marks the place from which Muhammad ascended to heaven. After

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<sup>145</sup> Fields, Suzanne. Prophecies of Doom, *Real Clear Politics*, 29 January 2007. Available on-line: [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2007/01/prophecies\\_of\\_doom.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2007/01/prophecies_of_doom.html), retrieved 2 November 2007.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Dittmer, Jason. ‘Of Gog and Magog: The Geopolitical Visions of Jack Chick and Premillennial Dispensationalism,’ *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 6(2), 298, Statesboro, Georgia: Georgia Southern University, 2007. Available on-line: <http://www.acme-journal.org/vol6/JDi.pdf>, retrieved on 10 December 2007.

<sup>148</sup> Albright, Madeleine. *The Mighty and the Almighty*. New York: Harper Collins, 2006, 137.

capturing Jerusalem during the Six Days War in 1967, the Israeli government adopted the position that Jerusalem is Israel's "indivisible, eternal capital."<sup>150</sup> In 2006, El Salvador decided to move its embassy from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv and now no country has its embassy in Jerusalem.

The interests of American Christians in the Temple Mount<sup>151</sup> are not well understood by the rest of the world, but are perhaps the most important in terms of consequences. Dispensational pre-millennialists hold that the Temple Mount is the location where a third Jewish temple will be built as part of the complex series of events leading to Armageddon and the Second Coming of Jesus. Jerusalem presents a difficult problem for the United States government. All administrations have attempted to avoid the issue by maintaining the United States embassy in Tel Aviv. The U.S. Congress has formally recognized Jerusalem as a capital and in 1995, Congress mandated that the embassy move to Jerusalem. Every administration since the passage of that law has waived penalties for non-compliance and delayed the move. Because the State Department has still not moved the embassy, the House passed H.R. 2601 (Foreign Relations Authorization bill) on July 20, 2005<sup>152</sup> to force the administration's hand. The Senate did not pass an authorization bill, and that particular measure did not become law. H.R. 895, introduced on February 7, 2007,<sup>153</sup> will attempt once again to force the executive to act on Congress' guidance concerning Jerusalem.

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<sup>149</sup> North, Gary. 'The Unannounced Reason Behind American Fundamentalism's Support for the State of Israel,' 19 July 2000. Available on-line: <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article1585.htm>, retrieved 29 December 2007.

<sup>150</sup> Migdalovitz, Carol. *Israel: Background and Relations with the United States*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2007, 25.

<sup>151</sup> This same hilltop is called the Haram Al-Sharif, or noble sanctuary, by Palestinians and Moslems. It is currently the location the Al-Shakrah Mosque, or Dome of the Rock. No policy preference is intended by my use of the term Temple Mount. I refer to it in that way here because my focus is on the importance of the site to American pre-millennial Christians without reference to Palestinian or Israeli claims.

<sup>152</sup> Migdalovitz, Carol. *Israel: Background and Relations with the United States*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2007, 26.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid*, 26.

The Israeli government accepted the Roadmap<sup>154</sup> with several conditions. The plan is officially backed by the U.S., Russia the UN and the EU. Knowledge of American millennialism would suggest that there is little hope for the Roadmap in its current form or for stern, substantive action on the part of the U.S. to force Israel's hand where the forfeiture of land is concerned.

Israel has difficult and complex relations with the European Union and it is likely that these same issues will eventually have a negative impact on U.S. relationships with the EU. The European Union does not identify Hezbollah as a terrorist organization. Many in Europe believe the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the major cause of terrorism and Islamist extremism. The Congressional Research Service assesses that the EU "has ambitions to exert greater influence in the Middle East peace process."<sup>155</sup> The EU disapproves of Israeli settlement activity and the construction of a security barrier. Israel, in turn, believes the EU is biased in favor of the Palestinians.

Israel has hundreds of settlements<sup>156</sup> in areas Palestinians feel should be part of their future state. Israel exercises military control over the West Bank and is building a security barrier to separate Israelis and Palestinians. Palestinians object to the barrier being built in West Bank territory as a border between Israel and Palestine that will cut Palestinians off from East Jerusalem. As of late 2007, the barrier was more than 60 per cent complete.<sup>157</sup> While a majority of American Jews and Israelis support some form of 'land for peace,' many American Christians oppose any policy that would call for Israel to do anything less than rule over all of Palestine – including the West Bank.<sup>158</sup> Recent U.S. Administrations have publicly disapproved of Israel's settlement activity as 'prejudging final status issues' and possibly preventing the development of

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<sup>154</sup> The Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.

<sup>155</sup> Migdalovitz, Carol. *Israel: Background and Relations with the United States*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2007, 23.

<sup>156</sup> According to the Congressional Research Service there are 242 settlements, other civilian land use sites, and 124 unauthorized settlement outposts in the West Bank and 29 settlements in East Jerusalem.

<sup>157</sup> Migdalovitz, Carol. *Israel: Background and Relations with the United States*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2007, 17.

a Palestinian state. Administration spokespersons are careful to not close off the possibility of Israel retaining any particular piece of land. On April 14, 2004, President Bush suggested there was a need to consider changed “realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli population centers,” adding “it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949.”<sup>159</sup>

Perhaps the single greatest indicator of true American interest abroad is actual spending. Since 1976, Israel received the largest share of United States every single year until 2003 when the demands of the conflict in Iraq caused the country to occupy the top position for American aid.<sup>160</sup> This is a significant fact that is difficult to understand using traditional political science or rational actor models. At the height of the Cold War when the European theater was said to be of paramount importance, the United States placed Israel with a population smaller than some American cities and no treaty or alliance obligations ahead of everyone else in the world for aid – including NATO allies. The timing is significant and coincides with the election of the first Baptist president since President Truman, who extended formal recognition to Israel against the almost unanimous advice of senior government and military officials. Perhaps more significantly, the timing of the shift in spending was at the crest renewed interest in dispensational pre-millennialism ignited by Jewish success in the Six Days and Arab-Israeli wars followed by the publication of Hal Lindsey’s *Late Great Planet Earth*. Israel’s position as the top recipient of American aid was unchanged through both Republican and Democrat administrations. This trend supports what we understand about the effects of dispensational pre-millennialism on the population and politics. Republican presidents since Carter have been affiliated with the older,

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<sup>158</sup> Kaplan, Esther. *With God on Their Side: How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy, and Democracy in George W. Bush’s White House*. New York: The New Press, 2004, 29.

<sup>159</sup> Bush, George W. quoted in Migdalovitz, Carol. *Israel: Background and Relations with the United States*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2007, 25.

<sup>160</sup> Migdalovitz, Carol. *Israel: Background and Relations with the United States*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2007, 27.

mainstream Protestant denominations,<sup>161</sup> but as individuals were clearly among the 20 per cent of the American population outside of formal pre-millennialism, but easily influenced by millennial thinkers. Both Hal Lindsey and Tim LaHaye were powerful advisers in the Reagan administration. In the case of President George W. Bush, his own Methodist church released a press statement shortly after his election pointing out that the new President's views and policies had much more in common with the Southern Baptist Convention than the United Methodist Church.<sup>162</sup> The only intervening Democratic administration was that of President Clinton – another Baptist<sup>163</sup>, which places him in the 25 per cent of formal, committed pre-millennialists.

On August 13, 2007, the U.S. Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, Nicholas Burns, signed a memorandum of understanding with Israeli Foreign Ministry Director General Aharon Abramowitz to govern a new 10-year, \$30 billion aid package.<sup>164</sup> The aid is primarily in the form of foreign military financing and averages \$3 billion per year. About a quarter of the money may be spent in Israel with remainder going to the purchase of American weaponry. The State Department's official position is that a militarily strong Israel is in the interests of the United States. Essentially, in spite of broad consensus that Israel possesses a more than adequate military, the United States continues to go to great lengths and expense to add to Israel's military capacity and strengthen the military relationship between the two countries.

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<sup>161</sup> The most frequent religious affiliation for American presidents has been Episcopalian (11 presidents), followed by Presbyterian (6 presidents). Every president except John F. Kennedy has been Protestant. President Reagan was a Presbyterian and not known for his religiosity, President George H.W. Bush is an Episcopalian, and President George W. Bush is a Methodist. Reagan's father was a nominal Catholic. President Reagan's mother was a member of the Disciples of Christ and Ronald Reagan was raised in the denomination. Reagan attended Eureka College, which is affiliated with the Disciples of Christ. As an adult, President Reagan identified himself as a Presbyterian.

<sup>162</sup> Paulson, Michael. 'Bush, Fellow Methodists Don't See All Eye to Eye,' *The Boston Globe*, 30 December 2001, available on-line: [http://www.adherents.com/people/pb/George\\_W\\_Bush.html](http://www.adherents.com/people/pb/George_W_Bush.html), retrieved 5 November 2007.

<sup>163</sup> In the history of the United States, there have been four Baptist presidents: Warren G. Harding, Harry S. Truman, Jimmy Carter, and William J. Clinton. Though few in number, beginning with Truman, their presidencies have coincided with critical moments in U.S.-Israeli relations.

<sup>164</sup> Migdalovitz, Carol. *Israel: Background and Relations with the United States*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2007, 5.

In 1998, the United States Congress recognized that Israel no longer required any economic enhancement or support, but continued to increase funding for the improvement and expansion of Israeli military capabilities. The Congress has also shown interest in funding another on-going program: emigration of Jews worldwide to Israel. In dispensational pre-millennialism, this is called the Ingathering and the return of the Jews to their biblical homeland in Palestine is an essential precursor to Armageddon.

Within the United States, Israel is often referred to as an ally, but the two countries do not have any mutual defense agreement. In spite of this, President Bush has said several times that the United States would defend Israel militarily in the event of an attack.<sup>165</sup> In 1981, Secretary of Defense Weinberger and Israeli Minister of Defense Ariel Sharon signed a memorandum of understanding to consult and cooperate on security issues. In 1983, the United States and Israel formed a Joint Political Military Group, which meets twice a year. The Bush administration is currently seeking to expand these meetings to four per year. Combined exercises began in June 1984, and the United States has facilities to stockpile military equipment in Israel.

In 1986, Israel and the United States signed an agreement on the Strategic Defense Initiative. Israel is developing the Arrow anti-ballistic missile<sup>166</sup> with more than \$1 billion from the United States. On May 17, 2007, the House passed H.R. 1585, the Defense Authorization Act for FY2008, authorizing the Administration's request of \$73.5 million for the Arrow and \$7 million for joint SRBMD. Sec. 228 of the bill requires the Secretary of Defense to expand the U.S. ballistic missile defense system "to better integrate with the defenses of Israel to provide robust, layered protection against ballistic missile attack."<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>166</sup> The system became operational in 2000 in Israel. The Defense Appropriations Act for FY2007, P.L. 109-289, September 29, 2006 appropriates \$138 million for the Arrow program. \$20.4 million is for a joint feasibility study of the Short Range Ballistic Missile Defense initiative, a missile interceptor designed to thwart missiles and rockets out to 200 kilometers.

<sup>167</sup> Migdalovitz, Carol. *Israel: Background and Relations with the United States*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2007, 29.



Millennialism is an important consideration when evaluating or implementing U.S. policy with respect to Israel or in the broader Middle East. Tenets of pre-millennialism are at odds with the U.S. official government position with respect to the Roadmap Peace Plan. It is unlikely that either a presidential administration of either party or the Congress will ever take substantive action to force implementation of the Roadmap. Since the U.S. is a guarantor of the Roadmap, this millennial reality may undermine U.S. credibility in foreign policy over the long-term and lead to continued conflict throughout the Middle East. Additionally, the confusing and inconsistent nature of U.S. actions will likely erode relations with the E.U., Russia and Arab nations.

The U.S. millennial proclivity for an unqualified military defense of Israel will continue to be a potential flashpoint of great import. Both the United States and Israel believe that Iran poses a credible existential to the state of Israel – especially if it is able to develop or procure a nuclear warhead. The Iranian Shahab-III missile system has the range to deliver a warhead to Israel. Ayatollah Khomeini declared the elimination of Israel to be a religious duty and current Iranian president Ahmadinejad cites him frequently when making similar statements. Because of the pre-millennial worldview, the U.S. will continue to adopt an adversarial approach to any country perceived as at odds with Israel. Since these conflicts are seen as deterministic and inevitable, there is little incentive to employ diplomacy or any other instrument of power other than the military in these situations.

## **ANTI-CHRIST, GOG, MAGOG, AND ARMIES FROM THE EAST**

“Ezekiel tells us that Gog, the nation that will lead all of the other powers of darkness against Israel, will come out of the north. Biblical scholars have been saying for generations that Gog must be Russia. What other powerful nation is to the north of Israel? None. But it didn’t seem to make sense before the Russian revolution, when Russia was a Christian country. Now it does,

now that Russia has become communistic and atheistic, now that Russia has set itself against God. Now it fits the description of Gog perfectly.” - Ronald Reagan<sup>168</sup>

While many Americans can readily see how pre-millennialism influences U.S. policy toward Israel and the Middle East, the effect of this philosophy on our dealings throughout the rest of the world may not be as recognizable. Pre-millennialism will drive the U.S. further from the U.N. in the near future since many pre-millennialists have to come to view that body as a platform for the Anti-Christ.<sup>169</sup> The U.N. and Arab countries are not the only millennial enemies. Viewed through the pre-millennialist paradigmatic lens, military interventions in the Middle East, such as the invasion of Iraq, provide strategic depth for the defense of Israel against the ‘army from the East,’ or China, and Gog and Magog, represented by Russia. American pre-millennialists will also feel increasingly threatened by the E.U. in coming years. Our self-imposed isolation, today referred to as unilateralism, and bold uses of military power are a thoroughly logical operational stance to contribute to the defense of Israel. In the United States Congress, H.Rept. 110-060, dated March 20, 2007, to accompany H.R. 1591 (Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for FY2007) states, “The fight in Iraq is also critical to the future of Israel.”

Pre-millennial interpretations of biblical prophecy that predict the emergence of a one-world government led by an anti-Christ causes distrust and even antagonism toward organizations like the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the European Union, NAFTA and OPEC.<sup>170</sup> Reflecting on her time as U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Madeleine Albright notes that many of her efforts were frustrated because the U.N. was widely perceived as playing the

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<sup>168</sup> Reagan, Ronald quoted in Dittmer, Jason. ‘Of Gog and Magog: The Geopolitical Visions of Jack Chick and Premillennial Dispensationalism,’ *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 6(2), pp. 278-303, Statesboro, Georgia: Georgia Southern University, 2007, 294-295. Available on-line: <http://www.acme-journal.org/vol6/JDi.pdf>, retrieved on 10 December 2007. The remarks were made in 1971 to a member of the California state senate.

<sup>169</sup> Phillips, Kevin. *American Theocracy*, New York: Penguin Books, 2006, 209.

<sup>170</sup> Bruce, Steve. ‘Y2K, The Apocalypse, and Evangelical Christianity: The Role of Eschatological Belief in Church Responses,’ *Sociology of Religion*, Summer 2001. Available on-line: [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0SOR/is\\_2\\_62/ai\\_76759009/pg\\_3](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0SOR/is_2_62/ai_76759009/pg_3), retrieved 27 December 2007.

“villain’s role” as the architect of world government by many American Christians.<sup>171</sup> Albright goes on to explain that she constantly found herself “on the defensive” and, as a functionary within the U.N., was perceived by many as “quite literally – the devil’s advocate.”<sup>172</sup> The Christian right constantly works to undermine the U.N. One particularly noteworthy example was a videotape produced by Phyllis Schlafly’s Eagle Forum titled *Global Governance: The Quiet War Against American Independence*, which prominently featured future Attorney General John Ashcroft<sup>173</sup> denouncing the U.N.<sup>174</sup>

While conservatives in the U.S. sometimes resent the UN as a check on American power, pre-millennialists are generally opposed to the UN. Pre-millennialists see the U.N. not only as a dangerous check on American power as it pursues a national strategy of righteousness, but they have also come to believe that the UN will is presently evolving into a platform that will serve the cause of the Anti-Christ. Pre-millennialists especially object to UN Resolution 242, which calls for Israel to abandon the Occupied Territories.

The Bush administration has sought to undermine the U.N. and has angered many foreign diplomats in the process. In the eyes of many American Christians, President Bush’s actions to distance the U.S. from the U.N. is actually “shedding the influence of Satan himself.”<sup>175</sup>

Since shortly after World War I, pre-millennialism has posed problems for relations between the U.S. and Russia. American pre-millennialists today are certain that the Russia will attack Israel within the next 60 years. Beginning with the *Scofield Reference Bible*, pre-millennialists have been nearly unanimous in their identification of Russia as the Gog and Magog of the *Bible*.<sup>176</sup> Furthermore, within the system of pre-millennialism, they have concluded that the

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<sup>171</sup> Albright, Madeleine. *The Mighty and the Almighty*. New York: Harper Collins, 2006, 82.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid*, 83.

<sup>173</sup> At the time the video was produced, Ashcroft was a U.S. Senator.

<sup>174</sup> Kaplan, Esther. *With God on Their Side: How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy, and Democracy in George W. Bush’s White House*. New York: The New Press, 2004, 31.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid*, 33.

<sup>176</sup> Boyer, Paul. *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1992, 157-159.

battles described in the *Bible* are unfulfilled prophecy, still awaiting us in the now very near future. In the minds of many American Christians, Russia figures prominently in a battle described in *Ezekiel* chapters 38 and 39 that will take place in the near future:

The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; prophesy against him and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army—your horses, your horsemen fully armed, and a great horde with large and small shields, all of them brandishing their swords. Persia, Cush and Put will be with them, all with shields and helmets, also Gomer with all its troops and Beth Togarmah from the far north with all its troops—the many nations with you. — *Ezekiel* 38:1-6

Within this prophecy, American pre-millennialists see equivalents to many modern-day nation states. While there are some differences, there is broad agreement that Magog refers to Russia. Meshech and Tubal are generally thought to refer to Turkey. Since Persia is the ancient name for Iran, the involvement of Iran in this impending conflict is considered a certainty. Cush and Put are often equated with Ethiopia and Libya. Broader interpretations read Cush as a reference to all of the black races of Africa and Put as the North African nations of Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Mauritania.

Due to the influence of pre-millennialism, there is great distrust of Russia on the part of the U.S. The belief in a deterministic view of near-term events that make Russian military aggression inevitable understandably obviates any incentive for cooperation or partnership. This has contributed to a persistent distance and suspicion that permeates the relationship between the two powers. Because of this, it will prove difficult, if not impossible, for the U.S. relationship with Russia to evolve into one of constructive cooperation. A Council on Foreign Relations commission chaired by Senator John Edwards and Jack Kemp has concluded that more than 15 years after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, U.S.-Russia relations are headed in the wrong direction and the promise of a strategic partnership between two major powers may no longer be

realistic.<sup>177</sup> In spite of the fact that cooperation would benefit both countries and the world, partnership seems inexplicably difficult. Russia could be a valuable ally, especially in coping with Iran and energy scarcity.

Instead of cooperation and partnership, the U.S. will likely continue to prepare for military confrontation with Russia. For the near future, U.S. military training and acquisition will continue to prepare for threats derived from an analysis of Russian capabilities. The U.S. will continue to support an expansion of Israeli military capabilities, probably with an emphasis on air and missile defense. The U.S. will continue efforts to expand NATO and Partnership for Peace programs, but will pointedly exclude Russia. Pre-millennialism will likely push U.S. defense policy in the wrong direction for years to come.

Beyond unnecessary defense expenditures, the lack of cooperation and partnership has far-reaching policy implications for the U.S. and the rest of the world. We will miss out on countless opportunities for meaningful cooperation between two major world powers that could contribute greatly to the resolution of problems on a global scale. For the United States, a declining agenda with Russia will sooner or later result in overextension of US resources and global disaster. Much good could result in the area of nuclear proliferation and intelligence sharing.<sup>178</sup>

Partnership between the U.S. and Russia could lead to significant improvements in dealing with North Korea, Iraq, Iran, and China. Russia could contribute to the long-term stability of the Middle East, but we fear any involvement that would seem to lead to the fulfillment of biblical battles. Suspicion on the part of the U.S. can be hard for other nations to understand. In the case of Russia, it is reasonable to expect that they will respond with suspicion of U.S. actions

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<sup>177</sup> Council on Foreign Relations. 'U.S.-Russia Relations Headed in Wrong Direction, Concludes Council Task Force Chaired by Edwards and Kemp,' *CFR.org*. Available on-line: <http://www.cfr.org/publication/10020/>, retrieved on: 22 December 2007.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

on the global stage. One example of Russian suspicion is the effort on the part of the Russians to curtail U.S. and NATO military access to Central Asian bases.<sup>179</sup>

Most pre-millennialists agree that China is the central figure in the 'kings of the east' that will gather to attack Israel at the Battle of Armageddon, as described in *Revelation* 16:12-16:

The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

"Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."

Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

According to most pre-millennialists, China will attack with an army numbering 200-million, as described in *Revelation* 9:13-16:

The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million.

These ideas concerning China's role in the near future undoubtedly create an undercurrent of distrust on the part of U.S. policymakers and strategists. This will likely cause continuing tensions in Asia and the Pacific. U.S. leaders run a risk of misinterpreting and overreacting to Chinese policies, initiatives and military programs.

Beyond the obvious problems of policy in the Middle East, pre-millennialism will increasingly place the U.S. at odds with nearly every major actor on the global stage. The U.N. and the E.U. are viewed with suspicion as likely platforms for Anti-Christ power and the agenda of Satan. The U.S. will continue to view both Russia and China as inevitable military threats. Pre-millennialism can support increasingly advanced weaponry in the Congress. While unpleasant

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

and unpopular, military intervention in the Middle East will be seen as a Christian duty in support of Israel. In short, pre-millennialism will continue to argue for unilateral military action.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“The enemy is a spiritual enemy. It’s called the principality of darkness. We, ladies and gentlemen, are in a spiritual battle, not a physical battle. Oh, we’ve got soldiers fighting on the battlefields, we’ve got sailors, marines, airmen, coast guardsmen out there fighting against a physical enemy. But the battle this nation is in is a spiritual battle, it’s a battle for our soul. And the enemy is a guy called Satan – Satan wants to destroy this nation. He wants to destroy us as a nation and he wants to destroy us as a Christian army.”<sup>180</sup>

- U.S. Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence, Lieutenant General Boykin, 2003

A 2003 survey found that more than two-thirds of evangelical leaders view Islam as a religion of violence bent on world domination.<sup>181</sup> Following the events of September 11, 2001, many Christian opinion leaders began to speak of President Bush’s election and policies as “divinely inspired.”<sup>182</sup> This attitude can present challenges to rational decision-making processes. While some political commentators have theorized that the administration’s unwillingness to admit errors is the result of arrogance or political calculation, it is more likely that the administration believes they are doing the will of God and will be vindicated in the end.<sup>183</sup> In

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<sup>180</sup> Boykin, William G. quoted in Kaplan, Esther. *With God on Their Side: How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy, and Democracy in George W. Bush’s White House*. New York: The New Press, 2004, 21. The remarks were part of a widely broadcast speech that LTG Boykin gave at the Good Shepard Community Church in Boring, Oregon that were later aired on *NBC Nightly News* on October 15, 2003. At the time he made his remarks, LTG Boykin was unaware they would be aired and he spoke freely to a sympathetic audience, thus providing an unguarded insight into his true thinking. See also Burns, Robert. ‘General Faulted for Satan Speeches: Boykin’s Remarks on Terrorism and Religion Violated Pentagon Rules,’ *CBS News*, 19 August 2004, available on-line: <http://election.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/10/16/terror/main578471.shtml>, retrieved 19 December 2007. These remarks are typical of American evangelical Christian commentary on current geopolitical events. They are informative because they were spoken not by an evangelical pastor or end-times author, but by an American lieutenant general serving in a senior policy-making position within the Pentagon. Lieutenant General William G. Boykin, then-Deputy Undersecretary for Intelligence, made similar remarks at 23 religious events hosted by Baptist and Pentecostal churches in 2002 and 2003. Lieutenant general Boykin wore his uniform at all but two of the events.

<sup>181</sup> Kaplan, Esther. *With God on Their Side: How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy, and Democracy in George W. Bush’s White House*. New York: The New Press, 2004, 13.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

other words, intelligence or analysis that seems to support invasions or other administration policies are interpreted as an affirmation of God's will, while information to the contrary is viewed with suspicion – perhaps an effort by Satan to deceive or mislead.<sup>184</sup>

As President Carter explained to former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, what people believe as a matter of religion, they will do as a matter of public policy.<sup>185</sup> There is a tendency on the part of Americans to view foreign policy and international affairs as a “clash of moral opposites.”<sup>186</sup> This tendency may make it difficult for U.S. policy makers and strategists to perceive and act upon subtleties that may lie outside our conceptions of moral absolutes. Military leaders have the difficult task translating this religiously tinged policy into successful strategy and operations. War is primarily about politics. While geography and technology play a role, in order to be successful military leaders must be able to see the political goals as clearly as possible.<sup>187</sup> Because of the influence of pre-millennialism, it can be difficult for military leaders to see themselves and their government accurately and state policy goals objectively.

Because religion in America directly impacts policy, military leaders and planners must learn to recognize the tenets and implications of American millennial thought. Millennialism has always been a feature of the American culture and has shaped not only the objectives of U.S. government policy, but also the way in which we interpret the words and actions of other actors on the international stage. Millennial ideas contribute to a common American understanding of international relations that guide our thinking regardless of individual religious or political affiliation. Millennialism has great explanatory value, significant policy implications, and creates potential vulnerabilities that adversaries may exploit. By gaining insight into and embracing

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>185</sup> Albright, Madeleine. *The Mighty and the Almighty*. New York: Harper Collins, 2006, 77.

<sup>186</sup> Wald, Kenneth D. *Religion and Politics in the United States*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1992, 65.

<sup>187</sup> Rosen, Stephen P. ‘The Future of War and the American Military: Demography, Technology, and the Politics of Modern Empire,’ *Harvard Magazine*, May-June 2002. Available on-line: <http://harvardmagazine.com/2002/05/the-future-of-war-and-th.html>, retrieved 1 February 2008.



intellectual honesty where our own prejudices and proclivities are concerned, we can greatly improve the quality and clarity of our decision-making.

Pessimism and paranoia are two possible results of pre-millennial influence. This can lead to inaccurate assessments on the part of military leaders and planners. In the Capstone Concept for Joint Operations, the Joint Staff describes the near-term future as one characterized by “a pervasive sense of global insecurity.”<sup>188</sup> There are actually many reasons to trend toward optimism. The U.S. military has no rival and our power is truly global in nature. U.S. military spending always exceeds that of the next several major nations combined. The U.S. military regularly enjoys a position of leadership on the international stage and effectively uses military power to intervene in the affairs of other states. Decision makers should guard against unwarranted pessimism. We should consider whether a contemplated decision or policy is either overly optimistic or pessimistic. Dispensational pre-millennialism typically causes a predisposition toward pessimism in world affairs and a general worsening of international relations. A pre-millennial reading of Bible prophecy paints a dismal picture of a world disintegrating toward a cataclysmic end where we are forced to confront the wrath and judgment of God. Assumptions and plans based on this worldview will be less than ideal.

In the same manner that we so assiduously study the culture and thinking of others, potential adversaries may study us, to include the ramifications of millennial thought, and gain significant advantages. Millennial thought and its policy implications may create strategic transparency that affords adversaries an advantage in decision-making. In other words, by studying the tenets and predictions of dispensational pre-millennialism, one could, to some extent, predict U.S. government actions and reactions. This would certainly prove more useful in areas that figure prominently in dispensational pre-millennialist eschatology, such as Israel. An

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<sup>188</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations 2.0*, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, August 2005, 4. Available on-line: [http://www.dtic.mil/futurejointwarfare/concepts/approved\\_ccjov2.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/futurejointwarfare/concepts/approved_ccjov2.pdf), retrieved 1 February 2008.

extension of this strategic transparency might include an ability to provoke or manipulate American policy and subsequent action. With or without the efforts of adversaries, American millennialism may increase the fragility of or even disrupt coalitions. Finally, adversaries could easily transform an understanding American pre-millennialism into a highly effective set of information operations themes and messages or psychological operations efforts to achieve a variety of results with American leadership or the population at large. By recognizing these potential vulnerabilities, American strategists can take action now to mitigate the effects.

Based on what we know about the effect millennialism has on our thinking, we may incorporate additional considerations into policy formulation and evaluation to assist ourselves in the identification of defects, diminished objectivity or unwarranted biases.<sup>189</sup> As a result of millenarian influences on our culture, most Americans think as absolutists.<sup>190</sup> A proclivity for clear differentiations between good, evil, right, and wrong do not always serve us well in foreign relations or security policy. Policy makers must strive to honestly confront their own cognitive filters and the prejudices associated with various international organizations and actors vis-à-vis pre-millennialism. We must come to more fully understand the background of our thinking about the U.N., the E.U., the World Trade Organization, Russia, China and Israel. We must ask similar questions about natural events such as earthquakes or disease. An ability to consider these potential influences upon our thinking may greatly enhance objectivity.

The inevitability of millennial peace through redemptive violence and an exceptional role for America have been and continue to be powerful themes running throughout the security and foreign policies of the U.S.<sup>191</sup> Official U.S. government policy expresses these themes in a

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<sup>189</sup> Bruce, Steve. 'Y2K, The Apocalypse, and Evangelical Christianity: The Role of Eschatological Belief in Church Responses,' *Sociology of Religion*, Summer 2001. Available on-line: [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0SOR/is\\_2\\_62/ai\\_76759009/pg\\_3](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0SOR/is_2_62/ai_76759009/pg_3), retrieved 27 December 2007.

<sup>190</sup> Alexander, John B. *The Changing Nature of Warfare, the Factors Mediating Future Conflict, and Implications for SOF*, Hurlburt Field: Joint Special Operations University, 2006, 14.

<sup>191</sup> Dittmer, Jason. 'Of Gog and Magog: The Geopolitical Visions of Jack Chick and Premillennial Dispensationalism,' *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 6(2), pp. 278-303, Statesboro, Georgia: Georgia Southern University, 2007, 296-297.

number of ways from the National seal that reads *Novus Ordo Seclorum* – the New Order for the Ages – or the nuclear intercontinental ballistic missile known as the Peacekeeper. Whether Americans seek to subdue the continent to realize their Manifest Destiny, conquer the Soviet Evil Empire or rid the world of Saddam Hussein, millennialism imparts an unusual degree of certainty and fortitude in the face of difficult situations. Judis points out that, for the same reasons, millennialism is usually “at odds with the empirical method that goes into appraising reality, based on a determination of means and ends.”<sup>192</sup> As demonstrated by American history, millennialism has predisposed us toward stark absolutes, overly simplified dichotomies and a preference for revolutionary or cataclysmic change as opposed to gradual processes. In other words, American strategists tend to rely too much on broad generalizations, often incorrectly cast in terms of ‘good’ and ‘evil,’ and seek the fastest resolution to any conflict rather than the most thoughtful or patient one.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Judis, John B. ‘The Chosen Nation: The Influence of Religion on U.S. Foreign Policy,’ *Policy Brief*, 37, March 2005, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 3.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

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