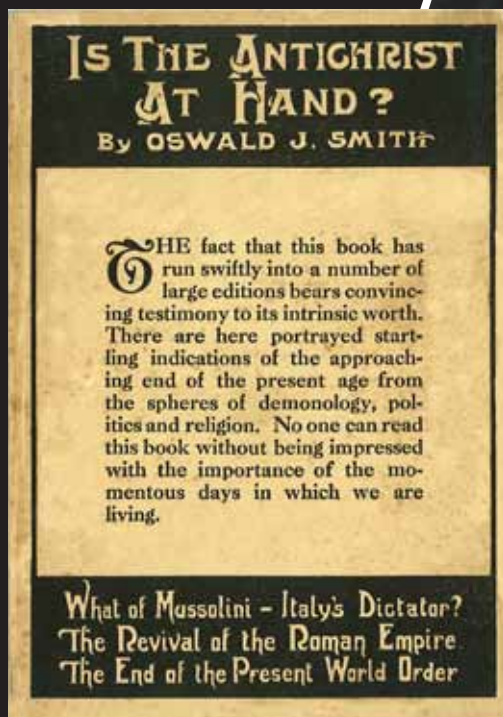


Doomsday Déjà Vu

How Prophecy “Experts” Have Led People
to Question the Authority of the Bible



Gary DeMar

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Doomsday Déjà Vu

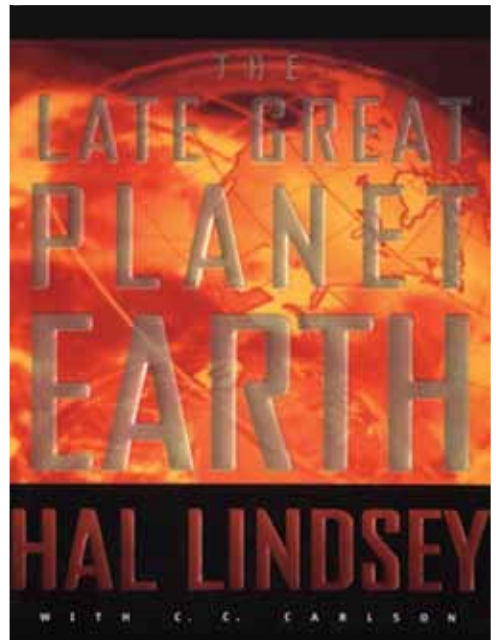
“Apocalyptic thinking is in the air,” so said University of Connecticut psychologist Kenneth Ring in 1990.¹ Long before 1990, speculation about the apocalypse was common, but it wasn’t until 1970 that the topic entered best-seller status and became part of everyday conversation. The 1967 Arab-Israeli Six-Day War focused attention on the Middle East as an apocalyptic hot spot, and prophecy writers began to take advantage of the emerging crisis as sales of prophetic books skyrocketed. “The single best-selling nonfiction book of the 1970s was not *The Joy of Sex* or even *The Joy of Cooking*; it was Hal Lindsey’s *The Late Great Planet Earth*.”² It was declared by the *New York*

Eschatology

The study of the last things. “Prophecy” and “eschatology” are often used interchangeably.

Times to be the “no. 1 non-fiction bestseller of the decade.”³ Estimates put sales at more than 15 million copies before the close of the decade. Since then, it has sold more than 28 million copies worldwide and remains in print today as evidence of Bible prophecy’s staying power even in light of its shop-worn predictions.⁴ “As Lindsey says himself, ‘The future is big business.’”⁵

From books like *The Late Great Planet Earth* and *Beyond the Crystal Ball*⁶ “Evangelicals acquired an abiding interest in ‘signs of the times,’ moments in secular politics



that might portend the great religious changes foretold in the Christian scriptures, especially in the Books of Daniel and Revelation. The

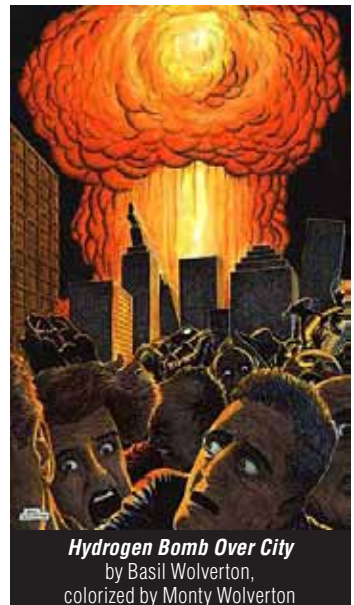
The “Rapture”

The “rapture” refers to a future event that is said to restart the prophetic time clock that has been stopped since the time of Jesus’ crucifixion. At the “rapture,” the church will be taken to heaven so God can exclusively deal with Jews. The most popular rapture theory claims that this event will take place before the start of a seven-year period of “great tribulation.” There are five different “rapture” positions: pre-tribulational, mid-tribulational, post-tribulational, partial rapture, and pre-wrath rapture.

re-creation of the state of Israel in 1948 signified that the prophetic clock was now ticking, that the countdown to doomsday had begun.”⁷ Israel’s national resurgence was seen as the key that would open the end-time meaning of prophecies written long ago. All would be fulfilled in quick order within forty years of 1948.

The Late Great Planet Earth had its apocalyptic predecessors, but with a big-name evangelical publisher behind the book, its breezy novel-like writing style, and the instability of world events, Christians were ready for an end-time scenario that would offer some hopeful sign of what the future might bring for *them*. It didn’t matter that Lindsey’s scenario would mean disaster for billions of others “left behind” to face an apocalyptic nightmare. Christians would be “raptured” before all hell broke loose.

The urgency of Lindsey’s book modernized prophetic passages from the Bible that had been used decades before to make the case that world events were up-to-date evidence that the countdown to Armageddon had begun. Herbert W. Armstrong’s 1975 *in Prophecy!*,⁸ written in 1956 and illustrated by Basil Wolverton (1909–1978),⁹ who also



1975

in Prophecy

FANTASTIC push-button world by 1975? It is being planned by modern science and industry. But *now* you're going to take a peek into the *surprising* future, exactly as it *will happen!* Not what men **PLAN**—but what **GOD SAYS!** Here, in understandable language, is a quick **SUMMARY** of *all* prophecy—the neglected one-third of your Bible—made **PLAIN**. It's truly startling!

BY HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG

YOUR own future is laid bare, *now*, in prophecy! The curtain of the future is drawn back.

Prophecies that were closed and sealed tight now stand **REVEALED**. This mystifying, neglected third of the Bible now becomes plain. Mysteries of God, never before understood, now become crystal-clear. God's own time for this revealing has come. The **KEYS** that locked the future have been found.

But what is actually *going to happen* *is not what the world expects!*

Today this world is changing—fast! Unprecedented events are shaking the world already. Yet what we have seen is mild compared to the catastrophic happenings that will rock this world in the near future!

You'll have to live into these tremendous times. This is **YOUR** life! You live here, in this erupting world! It behooves you to know what the Creator-RULER of the Universe now makes known!

PUSH-BUTTON LEISURE?

First, take a quick look at the world **MAN** envisions!

Feverishly, science, technology and industry are working to produce a fantastic, push-button world of leisure by 1975. The emphasis today is on "saving steps." Everything is to be done for us, by machines. Just push the magic button, and your work will be done automatically.

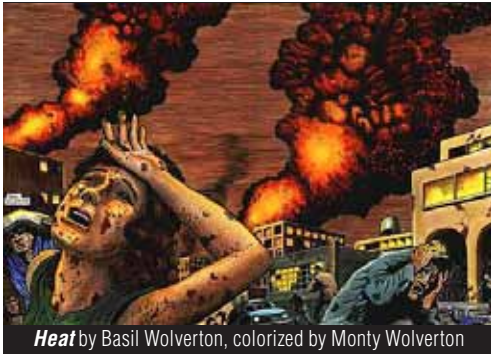
Already automobiles are equipped with push-buttons to shift the gears, raise or lower windows, move the seat forward, backward, up or down.

In the dream-world **MAN** is devising for tomorrow, it will no longer be necessary to cook food on stoves. Food is to be cooked by heat waves in packages. You'll no longer bother taking a bath in a tub or shower. You'll take an effortless and quicker *waterless* bath by using supersonic waves! When you pick up your telephone, you'll *see* the party at the other end! The new automobiles, the new homes, the new schools are to be truly fantastic. The stores, hotels, and railroad trains will take your breath!

And air travel? Well, already leading air lines have placed multi-million dollar orders for still larger jet planes

had done work for *MAD Magazine*, is almost indistinguishable from Lindsey's foray into prophetic sensationalism. Monte Wolverton offers this brief perspective on the apocalyptic views of Armstrong, the Worldwide Church of God, and his late father who was a minister in the church:

Armstrong thought he had discovered the heretofore lost key to all biblical prophecy, and that the Tribulation spoken of in the book of Revelation would shortly fall on the United



States and the nations of the British Commonwealth. Not unlike many evangelical preachers of the early 1930's, Armstrong adopted a dispensationalist paradigm, with a pre-millennialist, literal interpretation of the apocalyptic sections of scripture—albeit with his own particular spin. The

Bible, he taught, predicted imminent worldwide calamities, followed by the return of Christ and a happy Millennium, followed by the destruction of the wicked, followed by the advent of new heavens and earth.... As Armstrong's following grew, so did the threat of a second world war. He believed this was it—the Beast, the Antichrist, and the whole end-time enchilada. Armstrong, of course, was wrong—and this would not be the last time.¹⁰

Similar to Armstrong, who miscalculated the timing of the “Great Tribulation,” Lindsey was wrong about his prediction that a “rapture of the church” would occur 40 years after the 1948 founding of the modern state of Israel¹¹ with a near certain claim that the end would take place by the year 2000.¹² Unlike the Worldwide Church of God which abandoned its end-time dogmatism,¹³ Lindsey is as convinced as ever that the rapture is just around the corner. Even after most of his predictions did not come to pass as they were outlined in *The Late Great Planet Earth*, this has not stopped him from creating his



own prophecy empire that includes books, articles, CDs, DVDs, and a weekly prophecy update.

A Failed Trail of Predictions

There has been a large appetite for end-time books in the modern era—from Oswald J. Smith (1889–1986), who in 1926 predicted that Mussolini was the biblical antichrist,¹⁴ to Edgar Whisenant who was emphatic that the rapture would take place in 1988. Then it was 1989.¹⁵ Twenty-three reasons were offered in evidence for a 1993 rapture that never came. Still not shaken by his poor prophetic track record, Whisenant predicted *earth's destruction by nuclear fire in 1994*. He continued to speculate into 1997 with similar results.

Those who are new to the world of Bible prophecy have no idea how many of today's end-time "authorities" have made predictions that did not come to pass or how many of their predecessors also miscalculated when the end would come. Today's prophecy enthusiasts are under the false assumption that what they are reading in books and magazines, seeing on television, and hearing on the radio are recently discovered end-time truths of what they believe are current

events that match particular prophetic passages. Charles Wesley Ewing, writing in 1983, paints a clear historical picture on how dogmatism turns to confusion and uncertainty when it comes to linking current events to the Bible:

In 1934, Benito Mussolini sent his black-shirted Fascists down into defenseless Ethiopia and preachers all over the country got up in their pulpits and preached spellbinding sermons that had their congregations bulging at the eyes in astonishment about “Mussolini, the Anti-Christ,” and to prove their point they quoted from Daniel 11:43, which says, *“And the Ethiopians shall be at his steps.”* Later, Benito, whimpering, was hung by his own countrymen, and preachers all over America had to toss their sermons into the scrap basket as unscriptural.¹⁶

Newspaper Exegesis

The practice of interpreting the Bible through the lens of current events found in the headlines of newspapers rather than allowing the Bible to interpret itself.

Ewing goes on to mention how Hitler’s storm troopers took Czechoslovakia, Poland, France, North Africa, and set up concentration camps where millions of Jews were killed in what has become the modern-day definition of a Holocaust. Once again, preachers ascended their pulpits and linked these events to Bible prophecy and assured the church-going public that Hitler was the antichrist. When the allies routed the Nazis and drove them

out, sermons were once again tossed out or filed away to be revised at some future date hoping people’s memories would fail.

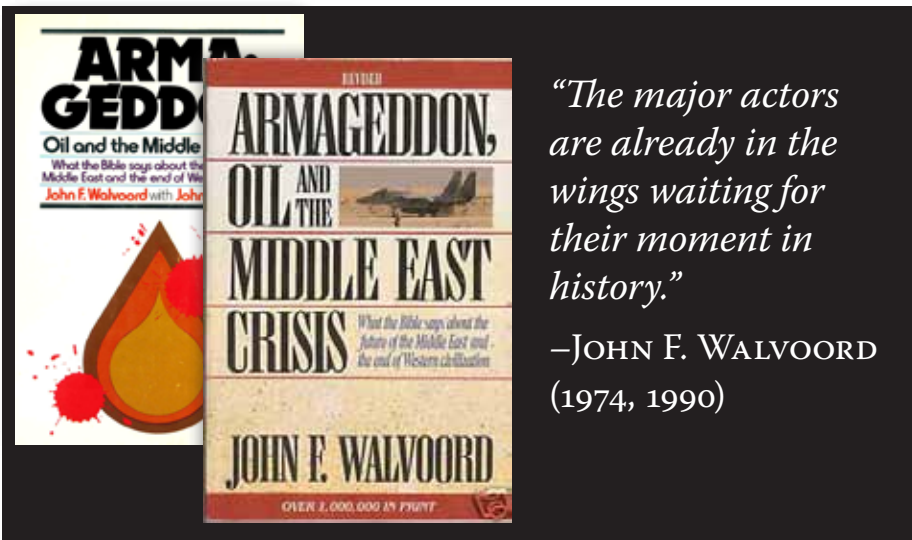
The next end-time-antichrist candidate was naturally Joseph Stalin since he was the leader of godless Communism, a movement hell-bent on conquering the world. History did not cooperate. “But on March 5, 1953, Stalin had a brain hemorrhage and preachers all over America had to make another trip to the waste basket.”¹⁷ We’re assured that this time, in our generation, the “prophecy experts” have finally gotten it right. Don’t bet on it. The track record of prophetic certainty is not very good.

A Temporary Lull in the Prophetic Storm

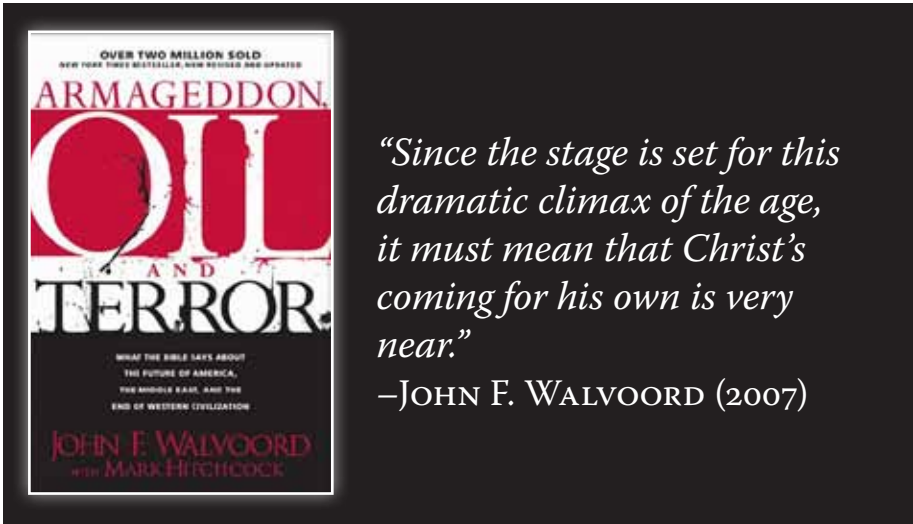
When 1988 was about to pass without the promised rapture of the church, Dave Hunt, another writer who has made his reputation with prophetic pot-boiler books, offered this analysis of the prophecy scene:

During the 1970s, when *The Late Great Planet Earth* was outselling everything, the rapture was the hot topic. Pastors preached about heaven, and Christians eagerly anticipated being taken up at any moment to meet their Lord in the air. When Christ didn't return after 40 years since the establishment of a new Israel in 1948 without the fulfillment of prophesied events, disillusionment began to set in.¹⁸

Disillusionment aside, it wasn't long before the gullible prophetic public was met with another round of end-time recalculations. Jerry Falwell (1933–2007) stated on a December 27, 1992, television broadcast, "I do not believe there will be another millennium ... or another century." He was wrong.



Like Falwell, John F. Walvoord, described as "the world's foremost interpreter of biblical prophecy ... [expected] the Rapture to occur in his own lifetime."¹⁹ It didn't. Walvoord died in 2002 at the



“Since the stage is set for this dramatic climax of the age, it must mean that Christ’s coming for his own is very near.”

—JOHN F. WALVOORD (2007)

age of 92. He had a long history of prophetic sensationalism. In 1974, he wrote *Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis* to fit what was then considered to be the latest in “prophetic events”—the OPEC oil production cut and embargo that began in October of 1973 in response to the West’s support of Israel in the Yom Kippur War. Walvoord wrote, “Each day’s headlines raise new questions concerning what the future holds.”²⁰ The book was reprinted in 1976 and then sank without a trace until a revised edition appeared in late 1990 when the six-month build-up for the Gulf War was in its final stages. The new edition reflected changing world events linked to an end-time reading of the Bible:

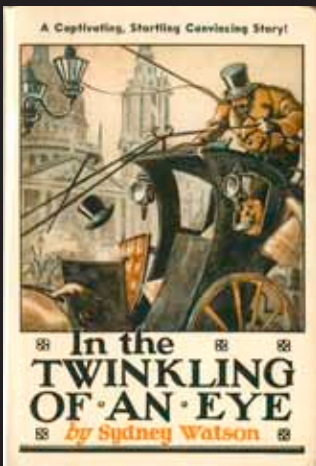
The world today is like a stage being set for a great drama. The major actors are already in the wings waiting for their moment in history. The main stage props are already in place.²¹ The prophetic play is about to begin.... Our present world is well prepared for the beginning of the prophetic drama that will lead to Armageddon. Since the stage is set for this dramatic climax of the age, it must mean that Christ’s coming for his own is very near.²²

When the Gulf War ended abruptly, the book was being remaindered for twenty-five cents a copy, if it was bought by the case! But

by then the book had sold nearly 1.7 million copies and was “the recipient of the Platinum Book Award from the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association.”²³ Once again, Walvoord’s prophetic speculation proved inaccurate. This did not stop Tyndale House Publishers from releasing a third edition in 2007 with a revised title and content to reflect a change in headlines—*Armageddon, Oil, and Terror*.²⁴ The promotion material assured readers that its content “is as current as today’s newstand every prediction rings true.” Where have we heard this before? That’s right! In 1974 when the first edition of *Armageddon, Oil, and the Middle East Crisis* was published. Like so much of today’s prophetic speculation, newspaper headlines are being used to interpret the Bible in what one scholar has described as “newspaper exegesis.”²⁵

The Revival of the End-Time Novel

With a new millennium on the horizon, interest in Bible prophecy was revived in 1995 with the publication of the first Left Behind novel written by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. The Left Behind series has sold more than 70 million copies since the first volume appeared. This does not count its many incarnations in a variety of different media: a PC game based on the Left Behind book series that is selling well and



“Think of what that will mean, unsaved friend, if you are here today. Left! Left Behind.”

—SYDNEY WATSON (1916)



"The tribulation is near at hand."

—DAYTON MANKER (1928)

sparking controversy,²⁶ a *Kids Series* (millions sold),²⁷ graphic novels,²⁸ a daily devotional, films, and so much more.

Many people are surprised to learn that left-behind type novels have been around for more than a 100 years.²⁹ Sydney Watson's *Scarlet and Purple* (1913), *The Mark of the Beast* (1915), *In the Twinkling of an Eye* (1916), which had gone through 25 printings by 1933, and *The New Europe* (1915) are early examples of the serialization of fictional prophetic themes seen through the lens of current events, the moral state of the nation, anti-Catholic fervor, and destabilized world politics. In 1916, *In the Twinkling of an Eye* anticipated the LaHaye-Jenkins title and theme with these lines: "Think of what that will mean, unsaved friend, if you are here today. Left! Left behind!"³⁰

In 1937, Forrest Loman Oilar's *Be Thou Prepared For Jesus is Coming* appeared. Oilar describes the entire left-behind premise in one volume, including the millennial reign and the subsequent Great White Throne Judgment. Like LaHaye, Oilar wrote his novel as an evangelistic tract "to bring to the unbeliever, 'the Jew first, and also to the Gentile,' a warning against false doctrines and to show the hope that is yet in store for him if he accepts the true gospel."³¹

Dayton A. Manker's 1941 *They That Remain*, that is, those who are left behind, followed the Watson and Oilar models with "Fascism,

Nazi-ism and Communism” as the new end-time bad guys that are described as “triplets of one blood.”³² Ernest Angley pursued a similar script with his 1950 novel *Raptured*. Probably one of the most interesting left-behind genre novels is Salem Kirban’s 666, first published in 1970. By 1976, it had gone through fourteen printings with more than 500,000 copies sold. There are a number of striking similarities to the LaHaye-Jenkins Left Behind series. The rapture takes place when the main characters are on an airplane; their wives are believers who were taken in the rapture; the rapture is explained away by those who are left behind; those who do not bow down to worship the beast are martyred, having their heads cut off by a guillotine.³³

“The Delusional is No Longer Marginal”

As long as prophecy books like *The Late Great Planet Earth* and the Left Behind series were viewed as discussions of peculiar religious themes they were generally dismissed by scholars, the media, and political watchers. When social commentators observed that there was a political dimension to prophetic speculation, people started to take notice. In 1977, D. S. Russell warned that end-time theorists might “*create* the very situation which is being described [in their prophetic writings] so that the interpretation given brings about its own fulfillment.”³⁴ It’s not surprising, therefore, that the issue of eschatology has become a topic of political conversation.

Social theorists are beginning to evaluate the possible cultural and political implications of Bible prophecy and how they might affect international relationships, especially in the Middle East. In his book *American Theocracy*, Kevin Phillips links the end-time scenario of many in the Christian Right to conservative politics as it relates to foreign policy and what the implications might be if that foreign policy is written as a script that requires a certain prophetic ending:

Book buyers will understand that in these United States volumes able to sell two or three hundred thousand hard-cover copies are uncommon. Not rare, just uncommon. Consider, then, the publishing success of end-times preacher

Tim LaHaye, earlier the politically shrewd founder (in 1981) of the Washington-based Council for National Policy. Beginning in 1994 LaHaye successfully coauthored a series of books on the rapture, the tribulation, and the road to Armageddon that has since sold some sixty million copies in print, video, and cassette forms. Evangelist Jerry Falwell hailed it as probably the most influential religious publishing event since the Bible. Several novels of the *Left Behind* series rose to number one on the *New York Times* fiction bestseller list, and the series as a whole almost certainly reached fifteen to twenty million American voters. Political aides in the Bush White House must have read several volumes, if only for pointers on constituency sentiment.

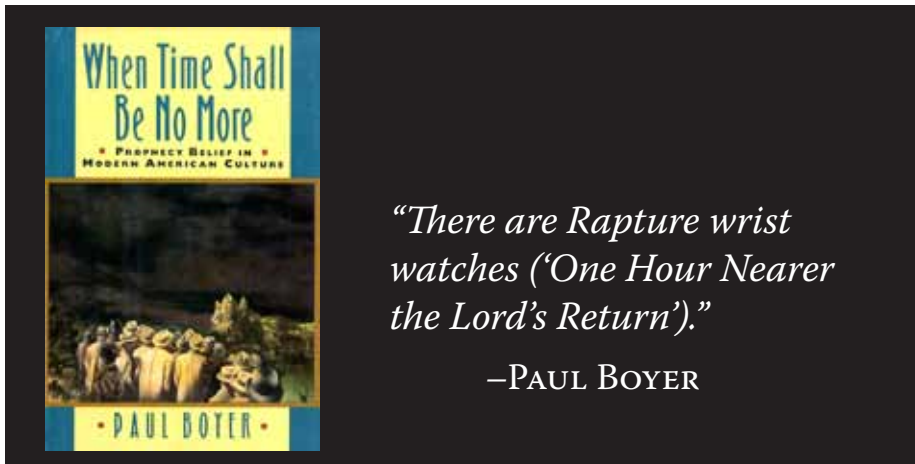
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Twenty years ago, The New York Times would not have considered LaHaye for the bestseller list, and my scenario of his writings influencing the White House could only have been spoof. Not so today. In a late-2004 speech, the retiring television journalist Bill Moyers, himself an ordained Baptist minister, broke with polite convention. He told an audience at the Harvard medical school that “one of the biggest changes in politics in my lifetime is that the delusional is no longer marginal. It has come in from the fringe, to sit in the seat of power in the Oval Office and in Congress. For the first time in our history, ideology and theology hold a monopoly of power in Washington.”³⁵

The highly influential Phillips, among others, demonstrates that eschatology is getting the attention of a broader audience, and not all of it is positive or even dismissive. Radio and print journalist Esther Kaplan writes that “[George] Bush’s Middle East policy perfectly aligns with the religious worldview of LaHaye and his millions of readers.”³⁶ Paul Boyer, professor emeritus of history at the University of Wisconsin at Madison and author of *When Time Shall be No More* and a long-time analyst of prophetic themes and their impact on politics,³⁷ pointed out as recently as 2003 that “as the nation

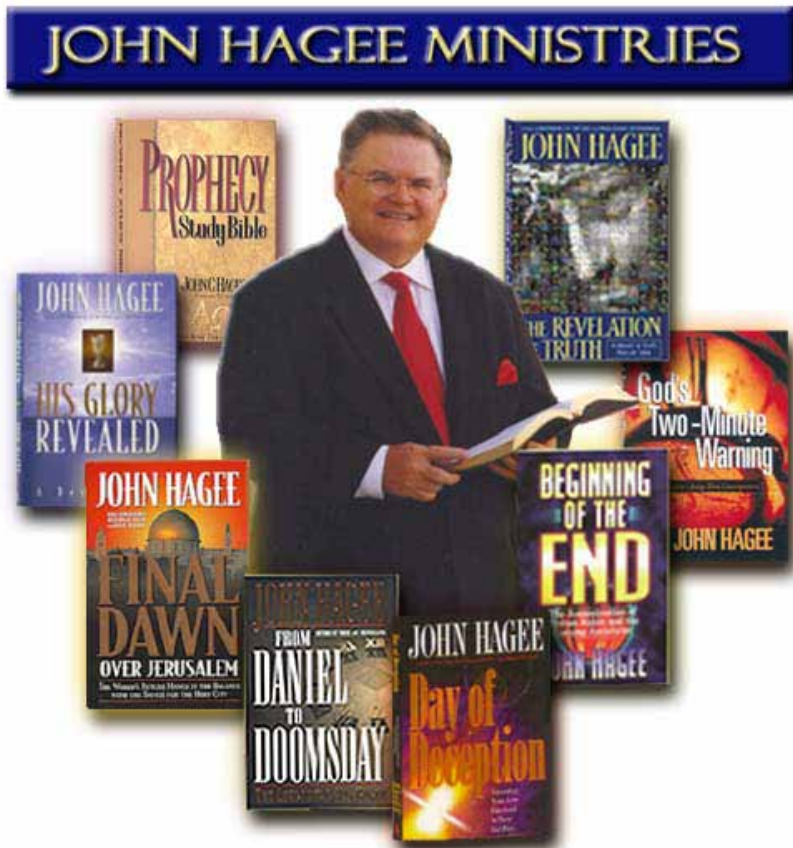
debates a march toward war in the Middle East, all of us would do well to pay attention to the beliefs of the vast company of Americans who read the headlines and watch the news through a filter of prophetic belief.”³⁸

Concern for the way Bible prophecy is influencing foreign policy is becoming increasingly prevalent as the number of books and articles show.³⁹ When Robert Dreyfuss, writing for *Rolling Stone* magazine, describes a prophecy writer like LaHaye as “Reverend Doomsday,”⁴⁰ Christians should take note. Keep in mind that it’s the push toward the *inevitability* of an always imminent apocalypse and the near glee that end-time writers express about the prospect of a blood-soaked world brought on by Armageddon and all its horrors that’s most troubling and unsettling. “When *Newsweek* reporter Kenneth Woodward and his colleagues investigated ‘The Boom in Doom,’ they found that



‘some expectant evangelicals appear positively cheerful in the face of Armageddon.’ They cite Pat Boone’s comment: ‘My guess is that there isn’t a thoughtful Christian alive who doesn’t believe we are living at the end of history.... I don’t know how that makes you feel, but it gets me pretty excited.’”⁴¹

The Bible certainly presents prophetic judgments as inevitable, but there are always warnings and ways to escape. For example, there is no doubt that Jesus made the case that the rebuilt temple standing



before Him and His disciples would be destroyed before that first-century generation passed away (Matt. 24:34). Notice, however, that it was a local judgment that could be avoided by simply fleeing to the mountains (24:16–20). Today’s prophecy writers are encouraging Jews to return to Israel where, according to their understanding of particular biblical texts, two-thirds of the Jews living in Israel will be slaughtered (Zech. 13:8–9).

“Dr. Armageddon” and His Predecessors

The person at the center of much of the rhetoric about an inevitable cataclysmic end is John Hagee, pastor of the 18,000-member Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas. His end-time-inevitability book *Jeru-*

saalem Countdown has sold nearly a million copies. Christians United for Israel, a Christian support organization for Israel, has tremendous political and fund raising clout. Hagee's dogmatic assertions about a fiery cataclysm and long political reach are scaring a lot of people:

While Hagee has long prophesized about the end times, he ratcheted up his rhetoric this year [2006] with the publication of his book, "Jerusalem Countdown," in which he argues that a confrontation with Iran is a necessary precondition for Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ. In the best-selling book, Hagee insists that the United States must join Israel in a preemptive military strike against Iran to fulfill God's plan for both Israel and the West. Shortly after the book's publication, he launched Christians United for Israel (CUFI), which, as the Christian version of the powerful American Israel Public Affairs Committee, he said would cause "a political earthquake."⁴²

Some of Hagee's critics say he not only wants "God's plan—as he sees it—to unfold, but to take an active role in seeing it happen."⁴³ At a July 19, 2006 CUFI event in Washington D.C., Hagee told the audience, "The United States must join Israel in a pre-emptive military strike against Iran to fulfill God's plan for both Israel and the West ... a biblically prophesied end-time confrontation with Iran, which will lead to the Rapture, Tribulation ... and [the] Second Coming of Christ."⁴⁴ Hagee has been described as "Dr. Armageddon" and "Pastor Strange-love"⁴⁵ by those who believe his prophetic inevitability scenario could lead a president to believe that an all-out Mid-Eastern war is a biblical directive. Hagee is ranked as one of the top ten influential spokesmen among Pentecostals,⁴⁶ so his words carry a lot of weight. With the ability to influence millions, war with Iran or any other anti-Jewish nation might come about because this large eschatologically driven voting-block could put pressure on politicians to vote in terms of a specific set of prophetic views.

To help fuel the fire of another war based on prophetic considerations, books with titles like *The Apocalypse of Ahmadinejad: The Revelation of Iran's Nuclear Prophet* and *Iran: The Coming Crisis* are

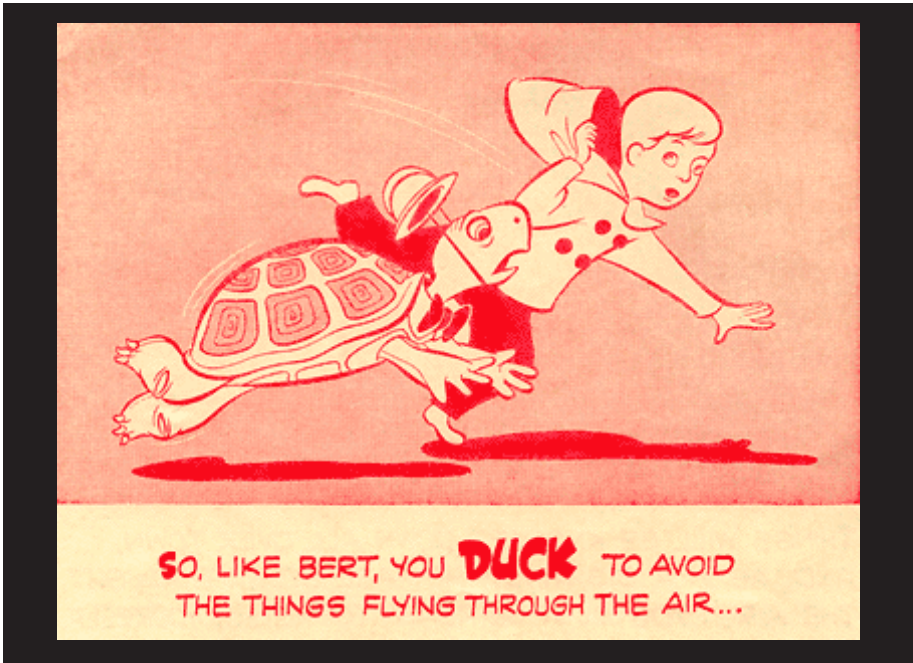
rolling off the presses faster than people can read them. There is no doubt that Ahmadinejad has certain apocalyptic aspirations. But so did a lot of recent tyrants. In 1942, James C. Hollenbeck wrote *The Super Deceiver on the World Horizon*.⁴⁷ And who was he? Syrian Prince Abdul Baraba Baha. Never heard of him? Welcome to the club. He's an obscure historical footnote, but he was trotted out because certain prophetic passages were made to fit then current events.

Dan Gilbert's *Emperor Hirohito of Japan: Satan's Man of Mystery Unveiled in the Light of Prophecy* was another futile attempt to make the headlines of the day fit speculative prophetic propaganda and set the stage for another world war. Gilbert was certain, based on his reading of Bible prophecy, that Hirohito, even after Japan's surrender, would amass "a gigantic yellow military horde that will total 200,000,000 men—the greatest army that ever was, or ever could conceivably be, created on earth."⁴⁸ Gilbert predicted, based on Revelation 16:20, that "the Jap islands will be sunk to a depth approaching the bottomless pit of hell itself."⁴⁹ Gilbert made this prediction in 1944. The only threat that Japan seems to be today is to Detroit and the domestic automobile market.

In 1988, Mikhail Gorbachev, the former premier of the former Soviet Union, was being prophetically positioned to be the promised last days' antichrist. To lend credibility to the claim, the author who suggested Gorbachev as the end-time bad guy is described as "a scientist who has employed research from the fields of mathematics, statistics, history, science, biblical prophecy and linguistics to reach very credible conclusions."⁵⁰ Gorbachev was the last General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that collapsed in 1991.

Duck and Cover

Fear of a nuclear apocalypse has a long history. In 1948, Wilbur Smith wrote *This Atomic Age and the Word of God*. Smith summarizes a speech that French Prime Minister Charles de Gaulle (1890–1970) gave on June 29, 1947 in which he declared "that Russia had now become such a powerful military nation that she could be considered an actual rival of the United States, and that her power threatened



to precipitate ‘a gigantic conflict from which no people and no man on earth will be spared,’ also, that Russia was ready to embark in the future on a final conquest of the world.”⁵¹ Similar declarations were made in 1947 by the emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists headed by Albert Einstein and Harold Urey. Their statement warned that “we approach what may be the last hour before midnight.”⁵² In 1951, using 2 Peter 3:9–13 as a prophetic proof text, as did Smith, M. R. DeHaan wrote:

For the first time in history we can now clearly understand the possibility of these statements of the Apostle Peter. It is a most amazing thing that almost two thousand years ago, Peter, an uneducated fisherman, was able to give us this clear, unmistakable picture of what would happen in the latter days, in the days in which we are living.⁵³

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, American schools practiced “duck and cover”⁵⁴ air raid drills, cities enacted civil defense mea-

tures, and families built fallout shelters in their backyard. It was a time of great fear and prophetic speculation.

Is 2 Peter 3 describing an out-of-control nuclear holocaust that God will use to bring an end to the earth as we know it and recreate a new physical world? If we use twenty-first-century technology as our interpretive authority, then it's certainly possible. But is this how the Bible is to be interpreted? Remember, the Bible is its own best interpreter. For example, the Greek word translated "elements" in 2 Peter 3:10 and 12 is often understood by modern prophecy writers to refer to the atomic elements that make up the Periodic Table.

Interpretation by Contemporary Events

Reading modern-day scientific concepts back into the Bible can cause insurmountable interpretive problems. For example, how many times have you heard a minister claim that the gospel is like "dynamite"? The comparison is made because the Greek word *dunamis*, translated "power" (e.g., Rom. 1:16), is the word Alfred Nobel chose in 1866 to name his newly developed explosive concoction. Since "power" and "dynamite" share the same Greek word (*dunamis*), so the argument goes, the New Testament's use of "power" must share the characteristics of dynamite. D. A. Carson describes this as "an appeal to a kind of reverse etymology,"⁵⁵ reading modern definitions of words back into ancient writings. Paul was not thinking of exploding sticks of dynamite when he used *dunamis* to describe the power of the gospel. Our understanding of the biblical use of *dunamis* has to be understood in terms of how it was understood in Paul's day. "[Gordon] Fee and [Douglas] Stuart rightly emphasize that 'the true meaning of the biblical text for us is what God originally intended it to mean when it was first spoken.'⁵⁶ We must first determine what a text meant 'in their town' before we can determine what it means and how we should apply that meaning to our own time and culture."⁵⁷

Consider DeHaan's brief commentary on 2 Peter 3: "For the first time in history we can now clearly understand the possibility of these statements of the Apostle Peter." This is not at all the case. Those who first read Peter's description of how the "elements" would be

“destroyed with intense heat” (v. 10) understood what he meant, and it had nothing to do with “atomic elements.”⁵⁸ David Chilton’s comments are very helpful on this point:

Throughout the New Testament, the word “elements” (*stoicheia*) is *always* used in connection with the Old Covenant order. St. Paul used the term in his stinging rebuke to the Galatian Christians who were tempted to forsake the freedom of the New Covenant for an Old Covenant-style legalism. Describing Old Covenant rituals and ceremonies, he says “we were in bondage under the *elements* (*stoicheia*) of this world.... How is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly *elements* (*stoicheia*), to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years ...” (Gal. 4:3, 9–10).

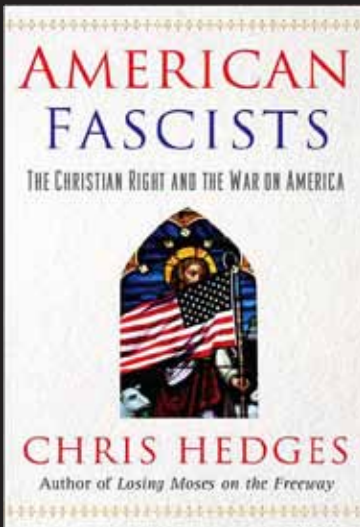
He warns the Colossians: “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the basic principles (*stoicheia*) of the world, and not according to Christ.... Therefore, if you died with Christ to the basic *principles* (*stoicheia*) of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—‘Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle’” (Col. 2:8, 20–21). The writer to the Hebrews chided them: “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the *elements* (*stoicheia*) of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food” (Heb. 5:12). In context, the writer to the Hebrews is clearly speaking of Old Covenant truths—particularly since he connects it with the term *oracles of God*, an expression used elsewhere in the New Testament for the provisional, Old Covenant revelation (see Acts 7:38; Rom. 3:2). These citations from Galatians, Colossians, and Hebrews comprise *all* the other occurrences in the New Testament of that word “elements” (*stoicheia*). Not one refers to the “elements” of the physical world or universe; all are speaking of the “elements” of the Old Covenant system, which, as the apostles wrote just before the approaching destruction of the Old

Covenant Temple in A. D. 70, was “becoming obsolete and growing old” and “ready to vanish away” (Heb. 8:13).⁵⁹

A case could be made that the “elements of the Old Covenant” did literally pass away with an “intense heat.” Jesus describes how “their city” would be set “on fire” (Matt. 22:7). “Most interpreters agree,” R.T. France writes, “that this is a specific allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, when large parts of the city were burned by the conquering Romans (Josephus, War 6.353–55, 363–64, 406–8).”⁶⁰ Like many prophetic passages similar to those found in 2 Peter 3, their fulfillment can be found in events in the past as the Old Covenant passed away and the New Covenant replaced it.

Apocalyptic Violence

Getting the interpretation of prophecy right will help in dealing with those who are not familiar with the topic and see danger in some of the talk about an inevitable nuclear holocaust. When a prominent prophecy writer associated with the Christian Right asks, “Is War with Iran Inevitable?”⁶¹ people get nervous. In his book *American Fascists*, a vitriolic critique of the Christian Right, Chris Hedges in-



“Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins had to distort the Bible to make all this fit.”

—CHRIS HEDGES

cludes a chapter on “Apocalyptic Violence.” He describes Revelation as a “bizarre book” that “is one of the few places in the Bible where Christ is associated with violence.”⁶² He sees the Bible as a text that can lead to “apocalyptic terror.”⁶³ He laments that “mainstream Protestant and Catholic churches,” which are declining in membership, “cannot hope to combat the hysteria and excitement roused by these prophets of doom until they repudiate the apocalyptic writings in scripture.”⁶⁴

There is no need to repudiate the apocalyptic writings, as Hedges suggests, but there is a need to understand them by using the Bible to interpret itself. While not agreeing with all of Hedges’ analysis of the Christian Right, he is on to something with the following comments:

[Tim] LaHaye⁶⁵ and [Jerry] Jenkins had to distort the Bible to make all this fit—the Rapture, along with the graphic details of the end of the world and the fantastic time line, is never articulated in the Bible—but all this is solved by picking out obscure and highly figurative passages and turning them into fuzzy allegory to the apocalyptic vision.⁶⁶

Unfortunately, Hedges along with many journalists who write on the topic of prophecy assume that the interpretive methodology outlined by LaHaye and Jenkins is the Bible’s methodology. Like so much of the rest of his book, Hedges didn’t do his homework. While the Lindsey-LaHaye-Hagee end-time paradigm is popular, it is by no means the only one in town. It is being challenged on a number of fronts. But because the alternatives don’t fit the “if it bleeds, it leads” journalistic standard, any challenge to the prevailing prophetic orthodoxy only get a few column inches or none at all.

A City on a Hill

The “great prophetic disappointment” of 1988 and the winding down of the Left Behind franchise do not mean that many formerly “rapture-ready”⁶⁷ Christians have abandoned a belief in the return of Christ, but it has led to a fundamental reassessment of the interpretive methodology that has been used to make repeated dogmatic arguments for an imminent end-time event. Many Bible-believing Christians who

cut their teeth on the works of notable prophecy prognosticators have questioned the popular end-time paradigm to such an extent that they “are not awaiting [Jesus’] return at the Rapture”⁶⁸ but instead are focusing on John Winthrop’s “city upon the hill” metaphor adopted from his “Model of Christian Charity” (1630). They have come to realize that the version of the end times that defined the twentieth century and continues to hold sway in this new century is a prophetic anomaly that had no history prior to 1830:

Pre-Civil War Evangelical eschatology was largely *post-millennial*, expecting Christ to return in judgment *after* a millennial reign of one thousand years. Post-Civil War Evangelical eschatology was dominated by a new doctrine of *premillennialism*. This view expected Christ to return *before* the millennium to take the saints out of this world in an event called the “rapture.”⁶⁹

After the War Between the States, the optimistic worldview espoused by the earlier civilization builders “was replaced by an eschatology that looked for the return of Christ to rescue the ‘saints’ *out of this world*. Premillennial teaching implied that the world was in such bad shape that it would only get worse until the return of Christ. Some even argued that efforts to ameliorate social conditions would merely postpone the ‘blessed hope’ of Christ’s return by delaying the process of degeneration.”⁷⁰ Christians who are rethinking the sensationalism of contemporary apocalyptic rhetoric have come to realize that America would never have been founded if today’s rapture version of eschatology had been prevalent in the seventeenth century. Where there had been an emphasis on “the propagation and advance of the gospel of the kingdom of Christ,”

[t]he vision was now one of rescue from a fallen world. Just as Jesus was expected momentarily on the clouds to rapture his saints, so the slum worker established missions to rescue sinners out of the world to be among those to meet the Lord in the air. Evangelical effort that had once provided the impulse and troops for reform rallies was rechanneled into exegetical

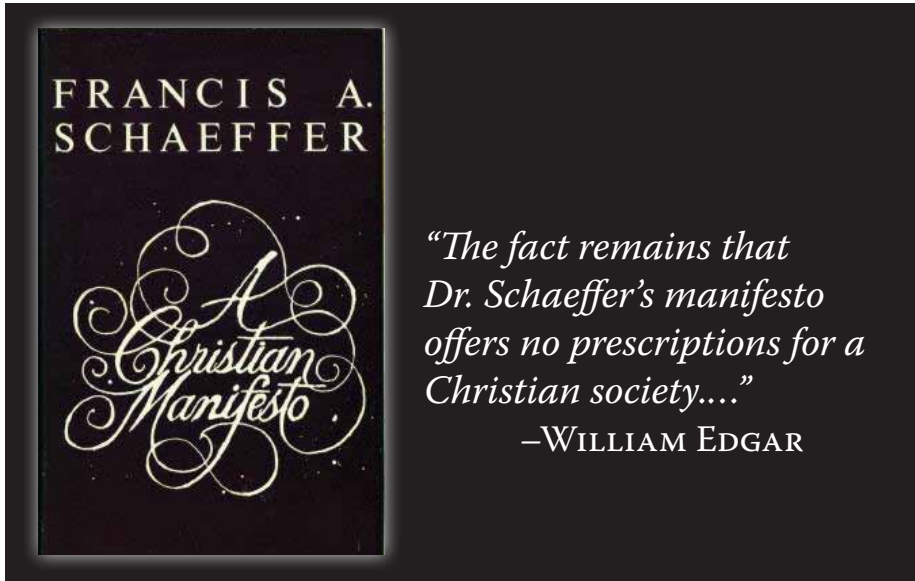
speculation about the timing of Christ's return and into maintenance of the expanding prophecy conferences.

The extent to which this shift in eschatology was felt throughout Evangelical life and thought is difficult to overestimate. One of the most striking contrasts between pre-Civil War revivalists and those after the war is that the former founded liberal arts colleges while the latter established Bible schools. To the post-war premillennialist the liberal arts college involved too much affirmation of the cultural values of this world and took time away from the crucial task of getting minimal knowledge of the Bible before rushing into the inner cities or the mission fields to father as many souls as possible before the imminent return of Christ. In the late nineteenth century the Bible school movement picked up the message of the prophecy conferences and trained a whole generation of Evangelicals in the new doctrines.⁷¹

Os Guinness writes that “dispensational premillennialism ... has had unfortunate consequences on the Christian mind,” including reinforcing an already developing “anti-intellectualism” and a “general indifference to serious engagement with culture.”⁷²

The implications of a world-be-damned biblical hermeneutic that leads to an “alarmist” worldview means that every negative newspaper headline is another support beam in an inevitable end-time constructed theology. The twentieth century is filled with such examples. William Edgar, a professor of apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary, recounts the time in the 1960s he spent studying in L'Abri, Switzerland, under the tutelage of Francis A. Schaeffer (1912–1984), a premillennialist.⁷³

I can remember coming down the mountain from L'Abri and expecting the stock market to cave in, a priestly elite to take over American government, and enemies to poison the drinking water. I was almost disappointed when these things did not happen.⁷⁴



Edgar speculates, with good reason, that it was Schaeffer's "premillenarian eschatology" that negatively affected the way he saw and interpreted world events. One of Schaeffer's last books, *A Christian Manifesto*, did not call for cultural transformation but civil disobedience as a stopgap measure to postpone an inevitable societal decline. "The fact remains that *Dr. Schaeffer's manifesto offers no prescriptions for a Christian society...*" The same comment applies to *all* of Dr. Schaeffer's writings: he does not spell out the Christian alternative. He knows that you 'can't fight something with nothing,' but as a premillennialist, he does not expect to win the fight prior to the visible, bodily return of Jesus Christ to earth to establish His millennial kingdom."⁷⁵ Tom Sine offers a startling example of the effect "prophetic inevitability" can have on some people:

"Do you realize if we start feeding hungry people things won't get worse, and if things don't get worse, Jesus won't come?" interrupted a coed during a Futures Inter-term I recently conducted at a northwest Christian college. Her tone of voice and her serious expression revealed she was utterly sincere. And unfortunately I have discovered the coed's question doesn't reflect an isolated viewpoint.

Rather, it betrays a widespread misunderstanding of biblical eschatology ... that seems to permeate much contemporary Christian consciousness. I believe this misunderstanding of God's intentions for the human future is seriously undermining the effectiveness of the people of God in carrying out his mission in a world of need.... The response of the (student) ... reflects what I call the Great Escape View of the future. So much of the popular prophetic literature has focused our attention morbidly on the dire, the dreadful, and the destruction of all that is.⁷⁶

Eschatological ideas have consequences, and many Christians are beginning to understand how those ideas have shaped the cultural landscape. A world always on the precipice of some great and inevitable apocalyptic event is not in need of redemption but only of escape. As one end-time speculator put it, "the world is a sinking Titanic ripe for judgment."⁷⁷ Any attempt at reformation would be futile and contrary to God's unavoidable and predestined plan for Armageddon.

Thankfully, many Christians are beginning to question this popular apocalyptic scenario, not by rejecting the Bible but by taking



Meteor Shower with Eclipse and Earthquake by Basil Wolverton, colored by Monty Wolverton

a closer look at the very Book they were told taught these things. In addition, they have come to recognize that Western Civilization was not built by head-for-the-hills doomsayers. Unfortunately, the effects of the apocalyptic paradigm are having some unsettling results in the realm of real-world politics. Some are contending that mixing eschatology and politics could lead to some terrifying results. The ultimate question is whether the Bible teaches what popular prophecy writers claim. This can only be settled by following the directive of the Latin phrase *ad fontes*, “to the sources,” that is, to the Bible (Acts 17:11).

In the following chapters, we will consider a popular interpretation of two sections of the Bible that are used to predict an inevitable series of wars that will lead to Armageddon. As history shows, “wars and rumors of wars” (Matt. 24:6) are common, and they have been pointed to as signs that the end was near in nearly every generation. In fact, they are so common, Jesus maintained, that they should not be used as signs. The same is true for earthquakes and famines (24:7) since every generation has experienced them (Matt. 27:54; 28:2; Acts 11:28; 16:26).⁷⁸

None of this has stopped prophetic speculators from claiming that prophecy is now being fulfilled. They point to Ezekiel 38–39 and Zechariah 12 to make the case that there is something prophetically unique about our day. They can do this because they claim to have found a very specific nation mentioned by the prophet Ezekiel—Russia! Who needs the commonality of wars, earthquakes, and famines when there is a named nation right there in the Bible. *Why the The End of the World* will test the claim that the Bible is describing prophetic events based on what Russia does.

Notes

1. Dick Teresi and Judith Hooper, “The Last Laugh?,” *Omni* (January 1990), 43
2. Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 93.
3. Quoted in Nancy A. Schaefer, “Y2K as an Endtime Sign: Apocalypticism in America at the fin-de-millennium,” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 38:1 (August 2004), 82–105.
4. <http://tinyurl.com/2ko72b>

5. Quoted in “Welcome to America’s wildest holy rollers,” Features Section, *The Independent on Sunday* (London, England) (November 6, 2005).

6. Merrill F. Unger, *Beyond the Crystal Ball: What Occult Practices Cannot Tell You about Future Events* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973).

7. Philip Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of the Eighties in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 84.

8. <http://tinyurl.com/52xcq8>

9. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basil_Wolverton

10. Monte Wolverton, “Wolverton’s Worldview”: <http://tinyurl.com/3uwbkl>. For a brief biography of Basil Wolverton, see <http://tinyurl.com/3mbsz3>.

11. Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970), 53–54.

12. “There are a lot of world leaders who are pointing to the 1980s as being the time of some very momentous events,” Lindsey told Ward Gasque in an April 15, 1977 interview in *Christianity Today*. He went on to state, “Perhaps it will be then. But I feel certain that it will take place before the year 2000.” For a reproduction of the article that carries this section of the interview, see Gary DeMar, “Questioning History,” *Biblical Worldview* (December 2007), 16.

13. Today’s Worldwide Church of God has repudiated its earlier foray into doom and gloom eschatology. See Joseph Tkach, *Transformed by Truth: The Worldwide Church of God Rejects the Teachings of Founder Herbert W. Armstrong and Embraces Historic Christianity* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1997), 155–160 and J. Michael Feazell, *The Liberation of the Worldwide Church of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 88–96. Also see the video *Millennial Madness* produced by the reorganized Worldwide Church of God (1997): <http://tinyurl.com/4axtse>

14. “There are here portrayed startling indications of the approaching end of the present age from the spheres of demonology, politics, and religion. No one can read this book without being impressed with the importance of the momentous days in which we are living.” (Oswald J. Smith, *Is the Antichrist at Hand?—What of Mussolini?* [Harrisburg, PA: The Christian Alliance Publishing Co., 1927], front cover copy). The book most likely continued to circulate until the death of Mussolini in 1945.

15. In a brief radio debate I had with Whisenant in 1988, he told listeners that if he was wrong with his calculations then the only possible answer for the mistake was that the Bible was wrong. It turned out that he was wrong but only because he claimed that he had miscalculated. “My mistake,” he wrote in 1989, “was that my mathematical calculations were off by one year.... Since all centuries should begin with a zero year (for instance, the year 1900 started [the twentieth century]), the first century A.D. was a short year, consisting of only 99 years. This was the one-year error in my calculations *last year* [1988].” (Edgar Whisenant and Greg Brewer, *The Final Shout: Rapture Report 1989* [Nashville, TN: World Bible Society, 1989], 1).

16. Charles Wesley Ewing, “The Comedy of Errors,” *The Kingdom Digest* (July 1983), 45.

17. Ewing, “The Comedy of Errors,” 45–46.

18. Back cover copy of Dave Hunt, *Whatever Happened to Heaven?* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1988).

19. Quoted in Kenneth L. Woodward, "The Final Days are Here Again," *Newsweek* (March 18, 1991), 55.

20. John F. Walvoord and John E. Walvoord, *Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974), 7.

21. Notice how Lindsey and Walvoord use the time indicators "near," "around the corner," "already," and "soon" to describe events they believe will take place shortly in our day. Every person who reads their choice of time words knows exactly what they mean by "near," "soon," "already," and "just around the corner." Yet when these same time words are used in the Bible, all of a sudden they take on a mystical, non-literal meaning. John writes, "for the time is near" (Rev. 1:3). Why doesn't John's "near" mean the same as Walvoord and Lindsey's "near"? Why doesn't the use of "the Judge is standing right at the door" (James 5:8–9) mean the same as Lindsey's "just around the corner"? The New Testament writers were describing prophetic events that were on the horizon for those living in the first century leading up to and including the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. See Gary DeMar, *Is Jesus Coming Soon?*, rev. ed. (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 2006).

22. John W. Walvoord, *Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 228. Walvoord claims that "Christ's coming for his own is *very near*." The New Testament, written nearly 2000 years ago, said that Christ's coming was "near" (James 5:8–9; Rev. 1:3). In his September 16, 2001, *International Intelligence Briefing Report*, aired on the Trinity Broadcasting Network, Hal Lindsey told viewers: "Tuesday, September 11, 2001, the end began.... The events, even of this week, show us that we're *very near* the end. The whole predicted scenario is fulfilled right before our eyes. All the pieces of that predicted puzzle that would indicate Christ's coming was *just around the corner* are in place.... I believe that, right now, we need to focus on the great hope that we have that Jesus Christ is *soon* coming and [is] going to translate [rapture] us from mortal to immortal." This is the same Hal Lindsey who assured his readers in the 1970 publication of *Late Great Planet Earth* that Jesus would rapture His church before 1988. He's the same "prophecy expert" who claimed in his book *The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon* that "*The decade of the 1980's could very well be the last decade of history as we know it.*" You would think that these errors in predicting the end would have been enough for Christians to rethink the basic tenets of dispensationalism or at least reject the false predictions of people like Lindsey.

23. As reported in "Zondervan Book on Prophecy Receives Bestselling Award" by Zondervan Publishing House (1991). On file.

24. John F. Walvoord and Mark Hitchcock, *Armageddon, Oil, and Terror: What the Bible Says About the Future of America, the Middle East, and the End of Western Civilization* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2007).

25. Greg L. Bahnsen, "The *Prima Facie* Acceptability of Postmillennialism," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction: Symposium on the Millennium*, ed. Gary North (Winter 1976–1977), 53–54. This article can also be found in Greg L. Bahnsen, *Victory in Jesus: The Bright Hope of Postmillennialism* (Texarkana, AR: Covenant Media Press, 1999).

26. <http://tinyurl.com/3jhsc6>
27. <http://tinyurl.com/44enmz> (book) and <http://tinyurl.com/4c9m7v> (audio)
28. <http://tinyurl.com/4c2ch6>
29. Amy Johnson Frykholm, *Rapture Culture: Left Behind in Evangelical America* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 205–207. For a comprehensive study of prophecy fiction, see Crawford Gribben, *Writing the Rapture: Prophecy Fiction in Evangelical America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009)
30. Sydney Watson, *In the Twinkling of an Eye* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, [1916] 1933), 134.
31. Forrest Loman Oilar, *Be Thou Prepared For Jesus is Coming* (Boston: Meador Publishing Co., 1937), 7.
32. Dayton A. Manker, *They That Remain: A Story of the End Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, [1941] 1946), 4.
33. Salem Kirban, 666 (Huntingdon, PA: Salem Kirban, Inc., 1970).
34. D. S. Russell, *Apocalyptic: Ancient and Modern* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 64.
35. Kevin Phillips, *American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century* (New York: Viking, 2006), xiv, xv.
36. Esther Kaplan, *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), 30.
37. Paul S. Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1992).
38. Paul S. Boyer, “When U.S. Foreign Policy Meets Biblical Prophecy,” *Alternet* (February 20, 2003): www.alternet.org/story/15221. Also see Walter Russell Mead, “God’s Country,” *Foreign Affairs* (September–October 2006), 24–43.
39. A recent example is Zev Chafets, *A Match Made in Heaven: American Jews, Christian Zionists, and One Man’s Exploration of the Weird and Wonderful Judeo-Evangelical Alliance* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), chap. 3.
40. Robert Dreyfuss, “Reverend Doomsday: According to Tim LaHaye, the Apocalypse is now” (January 28, 2004): <http://tinyurl.com/4c2ch6>
41. Kenneth L. Woodward, Dewey Gram, and Laurie Lisle, “The Boom in Doom,” *Newsweek* (January 10, 1977), 51. Quoted in Robert Jewett, *Jesus Against the Rapture: Seven Unexpected Prophecies* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), 24.
42. Sarah Posner, “Lobbying for Armageddon” (August 3, 2006): www.alternet.org/story/39748/
43. Dave Eberhart, “Pastor John Hagee’s D.C. Meeting Worries Jews” (May 17, 2007): <http://tinyurl.com/3yfslt>
44. Eberhart, “Pastor John Hagee’s D.C. Meeting Worries Jews.”
45. Sarah Posner, “Pastor Strangelove” (May 21, 2006): <http://tinyurl.com/yr4c27>.

“Pastor Strangelove” is a reference to the black comedy *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964). Dr. Strangelove is played by Peter Sellers who actually uses the phrase “left behind” to describe the survivors of a nuclear holocaust.

46. “Pastors Reveal Major Influencers on Churches,” The Barna Group (January 14, 2005): <http://tinyurl.com/6l86bj>.

47. James C. Hollenbeck, *The Super Deceiver on the World Horizon* (Los Angeles: Harry J. Gardener, 1942).

48. Dan Gilbert, *Emperor Hirohito of Japan: Satan’s Man of Mystery Unveiled in the Light of Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1944), 31.

49. Gilbert, *Emperor Hirohito of Japan*, 43.

50. Robert W. Faid, *Gorbachev!: Has the Real Antichrist Come?* (Tulsa, OK: Victory House Publishers, 1988), back cover copy.

51. *New York Times* (June 27, 1947). Quoted in Wilbur M. Smith, *This Atomic Age and the Word of God* (Boston: W. A. Wilde Co., 1948), 11.

52. Quoted in Smith, *This Atomic Age and the Word of God*, 11.

53. M. R. DeHaan, *Signs of the Times and Other Prophetic Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1951), 145.

54. Pat Zacharias, “When bomb shelters were all the rage”: <http://tinyurl.com/3hen7l>. See the “Duck and Cover” instructional film produced in 1951 by the United States Civil Defense Department shortly after the Soviet Union began nuclear testing. “In [the animated feature] *The Iron Giant*, Hogarth Hughes and his classmates in the year 1957 watch a film clearly inspired by *Duck and Cover* called *Atomic Holocaust*; it features groundhogs who, like Bert the Turtle, are wearing Civil Defense helmets. Later on in the film, when a nuclear missile is headed for the town, Mansley suggests ‘We can duck and cover!’ (to which General Rogard responds, ‘There’s no way to survive this, you idiot!’):” <http://tinyurl.com/yr4c27>. You can see the original “Duck and Cover” film at <http://tinyurl.com/jrrmu>

55. See D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1996), 34.

56. Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), 26.

57. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God’s Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 97.

58. Even if Peter had used the Greek word *atomos*, which means “indivisible because of smallness,” this still would not mean that he was describing atomic elements. Like every other biblical word, *atomos* would have to be defined in the way the New Testament writers used the term. It is used once in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 15:52 and is translated as “in an instant” or “in a moment.”

59. David Chilton, “Looking for New Heavens and a New Earth: A Study of 2 Peter 3.” See Appendix A. Also see Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*, 4th rev. ed. (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 1999), chap. 15.

60. R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 825.
61. Ed Hindson, "Is War with Iran Inevitable?," *National Liberty Journal* (March 2007), 4, 9–10.
62. Chris Hedges, *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 4.
63. Hedges, *American Fascists*, 6.
64. Hedges, *American Fascists*, 7.
65. Ed Hindson is co-author of *Global Warning: Are We on the Brink of World War III?* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2007) with Tim LaHaye. LaHaye has helped found a number of conservative Christian political organizations (e.g., Christian Voice, The Moral Majority, Council for National Policy).
66. Hedges, *American Fascists*, 184.
67. Todd Strandberg and Terry James, *Are You Rapture Ready? Signs, Prophecies, Warnings, Threats, and Suspicions that the Endtime is Now* (New York: Dutton, 2003).
68. Jeff Sharlet, "God Blessed America: How the Christian Right is Reinventing U.S. History," *Harper's Magazine* (December 2006), 14.
69. Donald Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 125.
70. Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage*, 126.
71. Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage*, 127–28.
72. Os Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds: Why Evangelicals Don't Think and What to do About It* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 63–65.
73. See Colin Duriez, *Francis Schaeffer: An Authentic Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 42.
74. William Edgar, "Francis Schaeffer and the Public Square" in J. Budziszewski, *Evangelicals in the Public Square: Four Formative Voices on Political Thought and Action* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 174.
75. Gary North and David Chilton, "Apologetics and Strategy," in *Tactics of Christian Resistance: A Symposium*, ed. Gary North (Tyler Texas: Geneva Divinity School, 1983), 127–128. Emphasis in original.
76. Tom Sine, *The Mustard Seed Conspiracy: You Can Make a Difference in Tomorrow's Troubled World* (Waco, TX: Word, 1981), 69.
77. Jan Markell, "Kingdom Now: We're Not Returning to Eden" <http://tinyurl.com/yr4c27>. For a response, see Gary DeMar, "Is the World a Sinking Titanic?," *Biblical Worldview* (May 2007), 4–6.
78. For a study of the signs outlined by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse and their application to the events surrounding the destruction of the temple that took place in A.D. 70, see DeMar, *Last Days Madness* and *Is Jesus Coming Soon?* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 2006) and John L. Bray, *Matthew 24 Fulfilled*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 2008).

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