

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Theological Students Fellowship (TSF) Bulletin (US)* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_tsfbulletin-us.php



BULLETIN

THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS FELLOWSHIP

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1984

Vol. 8, No. 1

\$3.50

EDITORS

Mark Lau Branson
Thomas H. McAlpine

ADVISORY EDITORS

Clark H. Pinnock, McMaster Divinity College
Paul A. Mickey, Duke Divinity School

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Ray S. Anderson, *Systematic Theology*
Fuller Theological Seminary
Stephen T. Davis, *Philosophy*
Claremont McKenna College
Donald Dayton, *News Analysis*
Northern Baptist Theological Seminary
Roberta Hestenes, *Christian Formation*
Fuller Theological Seminary
Robert L. Hubbard, *Old Testament*
Denver Seminary

Stephen C. Mott, *Ethics*
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
Mark Noll, *Wheaton College*
Church History

Grant R. Osborne, *New Testament*
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
David Lowes Watson, *Evangelism & Missions*
UMC Board of Discipleship

PERSPECTIVES EDITORS

Keith Bolton, Fuller Theological Seminary
Luis Cortes, Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary
Atlanta, GA
Nancy A. Hardesty, Mt. Paul Novitiate
Thomas F. Stransky, Harvard University
Sze-kar Wan, Harvard University

FACULTY CONTRIBUTORS

Bernard Adeney, New College, Berkeley
Donald Bloesch, University of Dubuque Theological Seminary
Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Fuller Theological Seminary
Harvie M. Conn, Westminster Theological Seminary
Charles Ellenbaum, College of DuPage
Vernard Eller, University of LaVerne
Elouise Renich Fraser, Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary
David Gill, New College, Berkeley
Larry Hurtado, University of Manitoba
Susanne Johnson, Perkins School of Theology
Richard Mouw, Calvin College
Richard Lovelace, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
PHEME PERKINS, Boston College
Bernard Ramm, American Baptist Seminary of the West
Gerald Sheppard, Union Theological Seminary
Charles R. Taber, Emmanuel School of Religion
Keith Yandell, University of Wisconsin

Letters to the Editor	2
Linking the Gospel and the Human Predicament: An Interview with Emilio Castro	2
Biblical Authority and Interpretation Randy Maddox	5
Women's Realities: A Theological View Linda Mercadante	8
From Knowledge to Wisdom: The Seminary as Dining Hall Hal Miller	10
How Ellul Transcends Liberation Theologies Thomas Hanks	13
The Politics of Biblical Eschatology: Ronald Reagan and Impending Nuclear Armageddon Larry Jones and Gerald T. Sheppard	16
Introduction to Francis Schaeffer's Jeremiad Ronald A. Wells	19
Francis Schaeffer's Jeremiad: A Review Article Ronald A. Wells	20
Early Christian Attitudes to War and Military Service: A Selective Bibliography David M. Scholer	23
News Articles A New Mission Agency in the United Methodist Church James Pyke	24
The Challenge of Missions History Richard Pierard	27
Sixth Evangelical Women's Conference Linda Mercadante	27
Review Article: A Christian Critique of the New Consciousness Douglas Groothuis	28
Book Reviews and Comments (Itemized on Back Cover)	31

esteem as the fundamental elements that have brought us to this rebirth.⁷⁶

Postscript

Too late for incorporation into this article, I received the excellent doctoral dissertation of Darrell J. Fasching, *The thought of Jacques Ellul: A Systematic Exposition*, Edwin Mellen Press, New York and Toronto, 1981. Together with the article by John Boli-Bennett (note 29 above), it offers the best available introduction. Fasching does not agree with Ellul's rejection of "utopias" (pp. xxi-xxviii, 170-176). Otherwise, he faithfully expounds many of the areas touched upon in this article.

⁴⁹ Hugo Zorilla, "observaciones y preguntas" (reaction to the paper of Jose Miguez Bonino), in Padilla, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 99.

⁵⁰ For more details on the centrality of Christ in Ellul's ethics, see Gill's dissertation (note 26), pp. 240-243.

⁵¹ Personal interview, Bordeaux, 1982.

⁵² Ellul, *TWTD*, p. 1. For details on the *sola scriptura* principle in Ellul, see Temple's dissertation (note 48 above), pp. 197-461.

⁵³ Personal interview, Bordeaux, 1982.

⁵⁴ Ellul, *ISOS*, p. 75.

⁵⁵ Huxley said that Ellul's work, *The Technological Society*, was comparable in importance to Spengler's *Decline of the West*, and that Ellul established the argument he had tried to offer in *Brave New World*; Gill, Introduction to Ellul, *ISOS*, p. v.

⁵⁶ Ellul, *POA*, p. 11.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12; cp. *BW*, pp. 85-125; *Violence*, pp. 30-35; see the article below.

⁵⁸ Ellul, *Violence*, SCM, London, 1970, p. 153.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁶⁰ Personal interview, Bordeaux, 1982.

⁶¹ Ellul, *TS*, p. 420.

⁶² Ellul, *PK*, pp. 96-136; *Propaganda, passim*; Christians and Van Hook, *Essays*, pp. 128-146.

⁶³ Colin Brown, ed., *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1978, III: 972-976.

⁶⁴ Pacifist theology and praxis are especially dominant in Chile and Brazil. Interview with William Cook, San Jose, 1983.

⁶⁵ Pablo Richard and Esteban Torres, *Cristianismo, lucha ideologica y racionalidad socialista*, Sigüeme, Salamanca, 1975, pp. 74-76.

⁶⁶ Ernesto Cardenal, *op. cit.*, pp. 20, 31, 57, 85.

⁶⁷ Ellul, *Contra los violentos*, Ediciones SM, Madrid, 1980.

⁶⁸ Thomas Hanks, *God So Loved the Third World*, Orbis, Maryknoll, 1983, pp. 105-08; Jacques Pons, *L'oppression dans L'ancien Testament*, Letouzey et Ane, Paris, 1981, pp. 27-52.

⁶⁹ Personal interview, Bordeaux, 1982.

⁷⁰ Ellul, *Violence*, pp. 169-70; cp. Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology*, pp. 106-31.

⁷¹ Emilio Nunez, "The Challenge of Liberation Theology," in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, July 1981, pp. 41-42.

⁷² Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, Knopf, New York, 1967, *passim*; cp. the critical essays in Christians and Van Hook, *Essays*, pp. 69-90, 128-46; also the dissertation of Fasching, Postscript, note 76, pp. 161-76.

⁷³ Hanks, *God So Loved the Third World*, ch. 4, "The Bible, The Reformation, and Liberation Theologies."

⁷⁴ Gill, "Jacques Ellul: The Prophet as Theologian," p. 9.

⁷⁵ Martin Marty, "The Protestant for this Summer," *National Catholic Reporter*, July 3, 1970.

⁷⁶ Robert A. Nisbet, "Foreward," in Christians and Van Hook, *Essays*, p. 5. Ellul's last evaluation Ellul has made of Latin American theologies can be seen in the journal he edits, *Foi et vie*, 81:5-6 (December, 1982). In particular, see Ellul's reviews, "Quelques livres de la Theologie de la Revolution," pp. 75-89. The books treated are: Ernesto Cardenal, *Chretiens au Nicaragua, L'Evangile en Revolution*, Caribe-CELEP, 1982, pp. 81-85; Vincent Cosmao, *Changer le Monde*, 1981, pp. 85-89. Ellul has evaluated Cosmao's book as "the first theology of liberation that convinces me" (personal interview, Bordeaux, 1982).

The Politics of Biblical Eschatology: Ronald Reagan and the Impending Nuclear Armageddon

by Larry Jones and Gerald T. Sheppard

"Pie-in-the-sky" religion is condemned by progressive evangelicals for its lack of political concern, a willingness to postpone issues of social justice in order to meditate on events during the period of the Great Tribulation. So-called "apocalyptic" eschatology appears to be pre-occupied with "things to come," and pays little attention to the way things actually are. Such a neat distinction between piety and politics often proves to be an illusion. Even apocalyptic ideas have direct political consequences for those who hold to them and to the *politeia* who are under their authority or influence. So, too, American politicians have often recognized a connection between public policy and their religious views. More than any other American president in recent history, Ronald Reagan has displayed a keen interest in biblical prophecy. His interest is evidently more than academic, for he has linked a number of political decisions to biblical prophetic scenario familiar to fundamentalist dispensationalism.

Charismatic Christians close to Reagan, Christian journalists, long-time friends and Reagan himself have made reference to the president's interest in prophecy. Reagan met with friends for an afternoon of fellowship on September 20, 1970 to talk about the Holy Spirit and the signs of the unfolding apocalyptic drama. The meeting is described in George Otis's 1971 book *High Adventure* and in Bob Slosser's 1984 *Reagan Inside/Out*.

After his appearance at a charismatic clinic in Sacramento, Pat Boone, his wife Shirley and two friends, George Otis and Harold Bredesen, drove to the Reagan home. Pat Boone told the Reagans of his recent experiences with the Holy Spirit, including the new song he had sung "in tongues." Recent headlines told of civil war in Jordan and Nixon threatened intervention. Reagan listened intently to his old friend.

At some point, Reagan turned the conversation to the subject of Bible prophecy. He told his guests of a story he had heard from Billy Graham. The famous evangelist, a long time friend of Reagan, told him of a talk he had had with Conrad Adenauer. The then West

German chancellor had asked Graham what the next great news event would be. Graham shrewdly answered, "The return of Jesus Christ."

Reagan, then, listed what he saw as the signs of the times: The scattering of the Jews, the re-gathering of Israel in 1948, and, most especially, the Israeli capture of Jerusalem in 1967. Reagan saw the stage being set for the last act in world history. George Otis described Reagan's using the Bible as a signpost or chronometer of history. For Reagan, the Old Testament prophecies marked the rise and the fall of empires in the timeline of world history. The Bible seemed to him to have authenticated itself by virtue of the complex and intricate "fulfillment of many prophecies." Otis reported that Reagan delighted in the wonderful cadence of history marching with such beauty and precision. Bredesen told the governor that he had failed to mention the most important sign of all, namely, the two great Pentecosts, one of Satan and one of God, which mark the present time as the "last days."

The trial of the cultic Manson murders had only recently filled the television screens and newspaper headlines. For their last fifteen minutes together the little group spoke fervently of their experiences with the Holy Spirit. Pat Boone gave his old Hollywood friend an enscribed copy of his recent book *A New Song*. Boone, Otis, and Bredesen presented Reagan with a copy of an apocalyptic pamphlet they had written, *A Solution to Crisis America*. Before they left the Reagan home, someone suggested they pray together. They joined hands in a circle. In the course of his prayer, George Otis was "possessed by the Holy Spirit." Otis or the Spirit possessing Otis addressed Reagan as "my son" and prophesied that Reagan would one day be "resident of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue." Otis' left hand, the one holding Reagan's right, began to shake and pulsate. Everyone opened their eyes and let go of one another's hands. Ellingwood drove away in the waiting limousine with the visitors. He told them on the ride back to Sacramento that while he held Reagan's left hand, it, also, shook and pulsated when Otis prayed. Later he reported having felt a "bolt of electricity" from Reagan's hand.¹

Possibly the first published evidence of Reagan's interest in biblical prophecy appeared in the May, 1968 *Christian Life*. In the lead article Reagan's pastor, Donn Moomaw, told of a visit he and Billy Graham had had with Ronald Reagan while he was in the hospital.

Larry Jones is a graduate student at Columbia University; Gerald Sheppard is Associate Professor of Old Testament, Union Theological Seminary, New York.

They became "engrossed in a discussion of "Bible prophecy in relation to the signs of the times." The writer, William Rose, confirmed that meeting with Governor Reagan. Reagan said,

We got into a conversation about how many of the prophecies concerning the Second Coming seemed to be having their fulfillment at this time. Graham told me how world leaders who are students of the Bible and others who have studied it have come to this same conclusion—that apparently never in history have so many of the prophecies come true in such a relatively short time.

Reagan added that he had asked Moomaw for more material on prophecy in order to check it out in the Bible for himself. Reagan's keen interest in biblical prophecy seems to have been especially incited by the 1967 re-unification of Jerusalem.

In October, 1983, President Reagan made an apocalyptic telephone remark to Tom Dine, executive director of the American-Israeli public affairs committee. The remark was published, first, by the Jerusalem Post and then picked up by the Associated Press. Reagan told the pro-Israel lobbyist,

You know, I turn back to your ancient prophets in the Old Testament and the signs for telling Armageddon, and I find myself wondering if—if we're the generation that is going to see that come about. I don't know if you've noted any of those prophecies lately, but believe me they certainly describe the times we're going through.

Reagan telephoned Dine to thank him for lobbying efforts of AIPAC to secure votes in favor of continued U.S. military presence in Lebanon. The U.S. embassy in Beirut had only recently been destroyed by a terrorist bomb. Only days after President Reagan's aside to Dine, a similar terrorist attack killed 279 U.S. marines near the Beirut airport.

Later, reporters from *People Magazine*, Dec. 6, 1983, asked Reagan about his remark. According to the transcript published in the weekly compilation of presidential documents, Reagan then asked them where it had been published:

The President: "Where was that?"

Question: In the Jerusalem Post. And I was going to say, "Is this really true? Do you believe that?"

The President: "I've never done that publicly. I have talked here, and then I wrote people because some theologians, quite some time ago were telling me, calling attention to the fact that theologians had been studying the ancient prophecies—What would portend the coming the Armageddon?—and have said that never, in the time between the prophecies up until now has there ever been a time in which so many of the prophecies are coming together. There have been times in the past when people thought the end of the world was coming, and so forth, but never anything like this. And one of them, the first one who ever broached this to me—and I won't use his name; I don't have permission to. He probably would give it, but I'm not going to ask—had held a meeting with the then head of the German government years ago when the war was over, and did not know that his hobby was theology. And he asked this theologian what did he think was the next great news event worldwide. And the theologian, very wisely, said, "Well, I think that you're asking that question in because you've had a thought along the line." And he did. It was about the prophecies and so forth. So, no. I've talked conversationally about that.

Question: You've mused on it. You've considered it.

President: (laughing) Not to the extent of throwing up my hands and saying, "Well, it's all over." No. I think which ever generation and at whatever time, when the time comes, the generation that is there, I think will have to go on doing what they believe is right.

Question: Even if it comes?

President: Yes.

Two years earlier, while President Reagan was lobbying Congress for AWAC surveillance aircraft for Saudi Arabia, he talked with Senator Howell Hefflin of Alabama about biblical prophecy.

Senator Hefflin told reporters:

We got off into the Bible a little bit. We were talking about the fact that the Middle East, according to the Bible, would be the place where Armageddon would start. The President was talking to me about the Scriptures and I was talking a little to him about the Scriptures. He interprets the Bible and Armageddon to mean that Russia is going to get involved in it.²

On another occasion, according to the New York Times, President Reagan euphemistically named the MX missile, a first strike weapon, "the peacemaker." His aides objected that this biblically based euphemism was too easily confused with "pacemaker," a word with an unpleasant connotation. Reagan obliquely changed the missile's name to "peacekeeper," a word which more properly invokes images of old west shoot-outs rather than the Sermon on the Mount.

Herbert Ellingwood, chairman of the Federal Merit System Protection, and longtime Reagan aide, recently told a reporter that Reagan has read and repeatedly discussed Hal Lindsey's *Late Great Planet Earth*. Reagan apparently believes in the apocalyptic scenario popularized by Lindsey, Falwell, and a host of other fundamentalist dispensationalists. According to this scenario, the Gog-Magog war will be a Soviet invasion of Israel. The invading Soviets and their allies will be crushed either by God or the U.S. nuclear arsenal, used as a tool in the hand of God. That war sets the stage for an Anti-christ, totalitarian regime. At the end of seven years of Tribulation, Jesus will come again to defeat the Anti-christ and to establish his millennial kingdom.

George Otis, who prophesied Reagan's presidency in 1970, believes that an Arab-Israeli war will trigger the "Gog-Magog" conflagration in which God/America will destroy the Soviet military machine. Otis writes in his 1974 book, *The Ghost of Hagar*,

The Bible clearly says that this troop movement WILL still take place one day in the near future. When will this be? Could it be during 'War Number Five' coming up against Israel? The early percolating of War Number Five has already begun. (Otis emphasis)

Otis foresees America coming to the rescue of Israel. "America," he writes, "will be blessed for her sacrificial role during Israel's crisis hour."

Translated into real political terms, this scenario means, arguably, a preemptive American first strike against a perceived Soviet attack on Israel. In order to protect Israel, the U.S. must defeat Russia. In order to "win" the war, a nuclear first strike is necessary. America's "sacrifice" would be the destruction caused by the Soviet second strike retaliation. But Otis hopes to be raptured out before the bombs explode.

George Otis is a former electronics manufacturer who made nuclear weapon system components. He now devotes his time to his "High Adventure" ministry and operated four radio stations in southern Lebanon. The late Major Hadad, a Phalangist leader, was a close associate of Otis. Otis' "Voice of Hope" radio devotes part of its programming to the Phalangist line. He first met Reagan the day he uttered his presidential prophecy. He interviewed Reagan in the 1976 presidential campaign and again during the 1980 presidential campaign. Otis was honorary chairman of "Christians for Reagan," an offshoot of Christian Voice.

On a number of occasions during the 1980 campaign, candidate Reagan remarked that "this may be the last generation." Dispensationalists like Hal Lindsey and Tim LaHaye are board members of Christian Voice, which has rallied support for Reagan's moral agenda. For the 1984 presidential campaign, LaHaye's "American Coalition for Traditional Values" (ACTV) is organizing a highly selective, voter registration drive to bring out the "born again" vote. Otis said in a recent interview that Reagan's re-election, "could make a difference in the timing of Jesus' return."

In 1981 Reagan's appointee, James Watt, then Secretary of the Interior, told a House Committee, "I don't know how many future generations we can count on before the Lord returns." Watt's remark raised a furor and resulted in perhaps some unfair parody. Watt made his statement so casually because fundamentalist dispensa-

tionalists view the coming Tribulation as a time of purifying violence will cleanse the earth for her millennial replenishment. George Otis, in his 1974 *Millennial Man*, writes, "Earth needs and will soon get her Millennium overhaul." For Otis, as apparently for Watt, the energy crisis was also a sign of divine providence:

Before all the earth's gears lock up for want of lubrication, this age will close. The oil supplies which God placed in the planet will prove adequate to squeak through this era.

The earth, Otis writes,

needs to be born again. But before it can, there must be a clearing away of everything decadent. Our all-wise Heavenly Father knows He must 'PLOW UP THE EARTH,' root out and eliminate everything that won't harmonize with His Millennial-life blueprint.

As Otis sees it, the earth must be destroyed first and then Jesus will return with his saints to "re-plant, re-build, and re-organize." This is the same Otis who, in his 1976 T.V. interview with candidate Reagan, asked

Governor Reagan, concerning another country that is extremely unique . . . Perhaps the most dramatic Bible prophecy which has been fulfilled right in our own day is the re-emergence of Israel as a nation. What do you feel America should do if ever in the future, Israel were about to be destroyed by attacking enemy nations?

Reagan answered,

Well, here again we have a relationship. We have a pledge to Israel to the preservation of that nation. They are an ally and have been a long time friend and ally and, again, I think we keep our commitments. I think there is a tendency today that goes along with the things you were mentioning earlier in our talk about the easy way and there are many people taking advantage of the war weariness that came from Vietnam, that long conflict. There are many people who would like to say that, that no agreement is worth keeping if it causes trouble to ourselves. We can't live this way; we have an obligation, a responsibility, and a destiny. We are the leader of the free world and I think, to a certain extent, in the last few years we have tended to abdicate that leadership. A very definite withdrawal from moral commitments.

President Reagan has frequently spoken of "God's plan" for America but has not publicly elaborated what he believes God's plan to be. Reagan delighted many evangelicals with his call for a national revival and his own public testimony to Jesus Christ. Privately, the president has talked repeatedly of his belief in an imminent "Gog-Magog war" involving the Soviet Union. Does the president believe that God has planned a national revival before the Tribulation and then an American sacrificial role in a nuclear Gog-Magog war? Just what the president's thinking is on the question of the secret Rapture is unknown. The president has, in a 1984 public speech to the National Religious Broadcasters, quoted from post-tribulationist Pat Robertson's *Secret Kingdom*. The apocalyptic coalition supporting Reagan includes the entire pre-, mid-, post-tribulationist spectrum. Reagan's longtime friends Pat Boone and Billy Graham are pre-tribulationists. But the difference between pre- and mid-tribulationist views is sometimes left up in the air. The people in Reagan's eschatological support group have learned to agree to disagree on certain nuances. Regardless, presidential beliefs in matters of biblical prophecy become a public issue if he sanctions, even by his public silence, this eschatological rationalization for the nuclear build-up for what seems to his supporters to be an inevitable nuclear conflict in the Near East.

Certainly Reagan's fundamentalist dispensational views, obtained through popular literature, like that of Hal Lindsey and George Otis, should not be equated with the essence of "apocalyptic" interpretation. While not rejecting the value of apocalyptic literature in the Bible, an evangelical New Testament scholar, George Ladd, wrote one of the more persuasive criticisms of these particular dispensational claims in his *The Blessed Hope*. Some Marxists associate themselves with apocalyptic expectation, and a major contemporary

theologian, Jürgen Moltmann, has persistently placed a positive stress on apocalyptic themes in his "theology of hope." Black theologian James Cone has similarly spelled out the importance of the "eschatological and future expectation" essential to the black church's understanding of the salvation story, often in terms of "the gospel train."³ Moreover, "dispensational" views can be found from the time of Augustine and in the work of John Calvin as a way to express views of God's progressive revelation in different periods of history. However, Reagan's statements reflect a particular type of dispensationalism which has only been an option in Christianity since a little more than a century ago.

For example, prior to the nineteenth-century, no figure in Church history advocated the belief in a "pre-tribulation rapture."⁴ This doctrine finds its origin in the prophetic studies of J. N. Darby in the 1830's. Yet, now in the twentieth-century, the publishing success of *The Late Great Planet Earth* has given the impression to the public that this position is one commonly accepted by biblical and theological scholars in seminaries across the country. The opposite is the case. In fact, most scholars have for so long ignored the whole position that many would not know the intricacy of its terms enough to refute it. They may be correctly challenged to take more seriously the popular views within the church and to address more adequately the eschatological questions too often casually side-stepped in seminary lectures and sermons, but they know that these views have almost no standing among their seminary colleagues.

In Timothy Weber's recent study of dispensationalism, he observes that the popularity of prophecy conferences during the last half of the nineteenth-century had subsided by the beginning of the twentieth-century because premillennialist views lacked any consensus among evangelicals. Nevertheless, World War I attracted renewed attention to matters of biblical prophecy and the dispensational pre-millennialist claimed that the break-up of the Ottoman Empire confirmed exactly their predictions based on Scripture. By 1919 prophecy conferences gained renewed popularity and sprouted up across the country. Favorite teachers and their elaborate, colored charts sought to diagnose the future of world politics.⁵ Eschatological charts carried their own psychological apologetic, often more persuasive than the technical arguments, for instance, between C. I. Scofield and H. A. Ironside, over the exact nature of "literal interpretation" and how strictly one must distinguish between the church and Israel in Scripture for "the system" to be exegetically sound. Many pentecostal groups, for example, adopted dispensational outlooks corresponding to these charts but generally neither understood nor endorsed the underlying hermeneutic of Scripture which justified the charts.⁶

Because of the timing and success of these new prophecy conferences after the World War I, Weber notes,

By 1920 premillennialist revivalists could afford to repress their doctrine, while before then they had been careful to remember premillennialism's distinct minority status within the evangelical mainstream.⁷

If one can, as historian E. Sandeen has argued, think of "fundamentalism" as a movement in reaction to "higher criticism" from the 1860's, it was only in the 1920's that the term "fundamentalist" was invented to describe a wedding of conservative historical views of Scripture on one hand, with a pretribulation rapture, premillennialist estimate of biblical prophecy on the other.

Weber, and Lewis Wilson in his *Armageddon Now*, review the ensuing history of speculation by fundamentalist dispensationalists regarding current events through the outbreak of World War II, the founding of the state of Israel, the cold war with Russia, and the present period of increasing nuclear tensions.⁸ Of course, everyone has a right, perhaps an obligation, to try to estimate what will happen in the future. The very symbolism of the endtimes within biblical prophecy invites a yearning for more precise revelation about the future of this planet. At this point, in our judgment, fundamentalists exhibit their most serious misuse of Scripture. By insisting on a rigorous, historical type of literalistic exegesis of the Bible, they strive to secure additional information hidden from the ordinary reader in the ambiguity of apocalyptic texts. They think they can peep behind veils which were not drawn aside for the author of the book of Revelation. But this dispensationalist ap-

proach, again, in our judgment, misconstrues the nature of the "sensu literalis" of Scripture, for literal interpretation of a "symbol" must *sustain* the text as symbolic or it ceases from being, any longer, "literal." Unless a biblical text is really a secret code (perhaps of parables, cf. Lk. 8:10) which only the insiders rightly understand, then the very power of symbolic texts lies in their multi-valency, their endless ability to contribute to the imagery and imagination of faith without allowing a single translation to end their symbolic interpretation once and for all or in favor of *our own* views of the world.

Only the return of Jesus Christ could end the symbolic interpretation of these apocalyptic prophecies in the same way as did the person and work of Christ in the first-century regarding the Christian eschatological interpretations of the Hebrew Bible. A prime example of the danger in premature speculation, like that proffered by so many fundamentalist dispensationalists, can perhaps be found in the Gospel story of Peter's confession of Jesus in Matt. 16:13-23. Recall how Jesus posed the key question to his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" After other disciples volunteer various opinions, Peter responds with the confession, "You are the Christ (lit. "the Messiah"); the Son of the Living God: (v. 16). Jesus seems elated: "Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jona!" We next find the classic text in which Peter is given the so-called "power of the keys" and made the rock upon which a future Christian church will be built.

Then, in this new atmosphere of understanding, Jesus begins to tell his disciples for the first time that he will suffer, die and be resurrected. Immediately, the same Peter, in some sense relying upon his own orthodox eschatology chart regarding the future of the Messiah, rebuffs Jesus, "God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you" (v. 22b). This disciple whom Jesus had just blessed, then received the strongest rebuke ever given a disciple: "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men." (v. 23) While Peter may have had the correct christology, he had a wrongly presumptuous eschatology which reduced the mystery of God's revelation to his own literalistic assessment of biblical prophecy. Modern views to the degree that they venture the same presumption, often at the price of marginalizing even the "plain" teaching of Jesus, invite the same rebuke from God who will surprise us and in whose hands the future must remain. The idea that America as a nation could tempt Jesus to return by offering him the burnt sacrifice of a world-in-nuclear-flames is a blasphemous parody of Christianity. Prophecy was never offered to sanction such an attack on creation.

The symbolism of prophecy checks those who cannot withstand surprises or mysteries deeper than any flicker of light within a crystal ball. If Augustine can describe even a creed as "a fence around a mystery," a symbolic fence around a mystery like that found in the apocalyptic writings of the Bible ought to make us more cautious than ever.

Our concern with Reagan's comments are, finally, twofold. First, the popular literature upon which he relies on is for us theologically dangerous and presumptuous, risking a rebuke from God like Christ gives to Peter. Of course, this theological critique does not depreciate either the value of apocalyptic literature in Scripture or the necessity of hope, with freedom to imagine what the future might portend. Second, an equally serious concern is that Reagan has been linking these speculative, fundamentalist views of Bible prophecy to his pragmatic vision of the world and to the role his presidential policies play in it. It is one thing to speculate about implications of Bible prophecy, it is another to take one's speculation as seriously as established facts which then can be cited in support of one's political decisions. Reagan has been cautious not to voice his position on biblical prophecy in major public speeches, but he has, at a minimum, confirmed a connection between prophecy and some of his policies to insiders in a casual but direct manner. Moreover, Reagan has openly supported the fundamentalist dispensationalist teachers, like George Otis and Jerry Falwell, who then publicize their special rapport with the President on these matters and leave no doubt that a ballot cast for Reagan is a vote for the right team in the final World Series of these last days.

In sum, not every fundamentalist dispensationalist crosses the line from speculation to confident prediction regarding contemporary political events. But the history of dispensationalists doing so is a long and disturbing one. At stake also is the most difficult issue of how religious belief ought to influence one's decisions in public political office. In 1980, a public confession of being "born again" was almost required of serious presidential contenders. We hope that the presidential election in 1984 does not become a mandate to experimentally test the dispensationalist hypothesis with a war of our own making.

¹ The description of Reagan's meeting with Boone, Otis, Bredeesen, and Ellingwood is a composite drawn from published statements and especially through interviews by Joe Cuomo of WBAI, New York City. Cuomo and, at times, Larry Jones, have had extensive telephone conversations about these matters with Otis, Bredeesen, and Ellingwood. References to "a reporter" primarily have Cuomo in mind. A documentary on the subject, with Larry Jones and Gerald T. Sheppard serving as consultants and commentators, has been aired several times in the New York City area and will, in a revised form, be aired internationally in the next few months. Among the many recently published journalistic investigations on Reagan and eschatology is "Does Reagan Expect a Nuclear Armageddon?" which was the lead editorial in the *Washington Post*, Sunday, April 18, 1984. It was written by Ronnie Dugger, publisher of the *Texas Observer*, with Larry Jones. Another article on the same subject by Dugger and Jones will appear in the next issue of *Mother Jones*.

² *The New York Times*, Oct. 29, 1981.

³ *God of the Oppressed*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. 56-57.

⁴ Timothy Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism 1875-1925*, (New York: Oxford, 1979), p. 13-42.

⁵ Smith, p. 21-24

⁶ Gerald T. Sheppard, "Pentecostalism and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism: The Anatomy of an Uneasy Relationship," p. 1-26, in *Pastoral Problems in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement*, ed. by Harold D. Hunter (Cleveland: Church of God School of Theology, 1982). A paper delivered to the Society of Pentecostal Studies, held Nov. 3-5, 1983.

⁷ Weber, p. 52.

⁸ Cf., also, E. R. Chamberlin, *Antichrist and the Millennium*, (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1975).

Well's Introduction to Francis Schaeffer's Jeremiad

by Ronald A. Wells

When the editors of the *Bulletin* requested permission to reprint my article from the *Reformed Journal*, the late Francis A. Schaeffer had not yet commented on it. Since then his last book, *The Great Evangelical Disaster* (Crossway Books, 1983) has appeared, so the editors asked that I take that writing into account and append the following for clarification. Even though Mr. Schaeffer is no longer with us, there are many persons who have been influenced by him, and it is with them that I would engage in dialogue.

While Mr. Schaeffer and I may well have disagreed on certain matters, that disagreement always proceeded in an atmosphere

of mutual respect. I am very pleased by the high tone and personal grace of his final evaluation of my writing—a tone which is in marked contrast to the critique on the same subject offered by his son, Franky, in his book, *Bad News for Modern Man* (Crossway Books, 1984). The younger Schaeffer's book has rightly been called "an ugly book" by Gilbert Beers of *Christianity Today*. Its treatment of a host of Christian scholars and institutions is beneath criticism, if not contempt, and it will not be discussed here. Francis A. Schaeffer's *Evangelical Disaster*, while hard-hitting, is nevertheless scholarly in tone and intent, and it is at one with the character of the author whose life and was work typified by an unflinching grace.

The subject on which we disagreed was the Reformation, or, more accurately, the uses to which the Reformation may be put