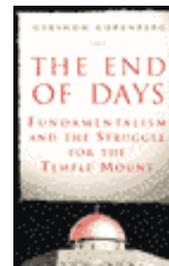


## The Once and Future Heresy

**Gershon Gorenberg, *The End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount*, The Free Press, New York, 2000, 275 pages**



Reviewed by Thomas J. Herron

It was a button that only William F. Buckley in the fun days at *National Review* could have designed. This was the Viet Nam War era after the summer of love in San Francisco when every group seemed to have its own special button with a unique slogan. The one that *National Review* was making available to its subscribers was certainly unique if only because very few people besides the polyglot William F. Buckley could be sure what it meant. It read “Don’t Immanentize the Eschaton.” The truth was that, contrary to what the subscribers thought, the phrase didn’t come from Mr. Buckley but from [Eric Voegelin, who coined it in a 1952 book \*The New Science of Politics\*](#). Those *NR* readers who were Catholic in the early 1970s, and that was probably the majority of us, had a head-start on deciphering the puzzling phrase because, somewhere in our education, we had heard of that division of theology called eschatology; which deals with the four last things: death, judgment, heaven and hell. So the eschaton in this phrase dealt with the end of the world and a quick translation of the button into plain English would be don’t try to create heaven on earth or don’t try to anticipate the New Jerusalem spoken of in the book of Revelation. What a difference three decades makes as now there are [fervent \*National Review\* writers and readers who are attempting to immanentize the eschaton for a variety of political and religious reasons](#).

Gershon Gorenberg’s study of the eschaton immanentizers alive and well in Israel today starts by introducing us to Melody, the almost red heifer, who was born there a few years ago. The reason this cow became front page news in that country is that if she were completely red, at age three, she could have been slaughtered and used for ritual purification purposes for priests at Jerusalem’s Jewish Temple, according to the prescriptions of Numbers 19. As you probably know there hasn’t been a [Jewish Temple in Jerusalem](#) since 70 A.D., when the Romans, under Titus, burnt down the one built by Herod. The territory atop Mt. Moriah is currently occupied by a holy Muslim site, the al-Asqa mosque. However, there is a sizeable group

of people who view the events of the 20th century as prologue to the construction of the third Jewish Temple on that site; not all of these people are in Israel and, as this book indicates, most of them aren't Jewish.

The book starts off with a disappointment and chronicles a series of prior disappointments with the arrival of the End Times; Melody is not completely red, she has a few brown hairs on her tail. But Melody's existence was enough to send Jewish society in Israel into convulsions, a fact that, if fully explored by the American media, would sharply undercut the contention of that nation's fervent publicists in this country that it is a democratic society just like ours.

We should understand at first that this really isn't just a study of Jews or Muslims in the Middle East. In the first chapters the author interviews Rabbi Shmaria Shore of the [Temple Institute](#) in a Jerusalem pizza parlor. Shore was one of the experts who had to make a judgment on Melody's suitability. Gorenberg notices the rabbi's heavily American-accented Hebrew and switches to English. It seems the rabbi was born Stephen Shore in New Haven and came to Israel on the tail end of the student radical and hippie movements of the 1970s. In this he found a ready companion in the author who followed a similar tack from the West Coast and who found post-Viet Nam America too tame compared with the messianic fervor in the Holy Land. This seems to be a common trait among a large number of the Israeli settlers on the West Bank. As Gorenberg states, his relocation to Israel showed, "Simply deciding to live in the country rather than returning to an easier life in California would be a political statement." The American connections dominate this book with the actual landscape of the Middle East serving as a backdrop to ideas that have largely been brewing in the good, old U.S.A. for a long time. Mr. Gorenberg retains an American connection with an associate membership in [Boston University's Center for Millennial Studies](#) and he uses American scholars extensively in his review of Muslim ideas on the end of the world. Living in Israel since 1977 has not encouraged the author to get to know the Palestinians to any great degree or to learn Arabic to any depth.

However, Hebrew speakers with strong American accents aren't the only players in the Melody story, one of the key actors has a strong Mississippi drawl. The Reverend Clyde Lott was raised a Southern Baptist but became a Pentecostal minister after studying for a mail-order divinity degree. Lott noted that during the late 1980s there was a great deal of prophecy in Pentecostal circles in Mississippi dealing with when the Jews would construct the Third Temple. Lott, a dairy farmer by trade, decided to do something practical to help the eschatological process along by importing a large number of cattle into Israel so that the requisite red heifer could be genetically engineered. In his efforts to secure the Lord's Second Coming, Rev. Lott became a close friend with the messianistic Rabbi Chaim Richman of Jerusalem's Temple Institute and stated that he "felt closer to him than to some members of his own family." There would again be no language problem here as the rabbi is from Massachusetts. Early on in the book we see both Jewish and Christian American hands at work in forcing the End of Days upon the world with a definite Yankee faith in the blessings of modern

technology. As Gorenberg states, “Lott isn’t the only person pulled to the vision of Temple-building because it promises that a technical skill is essential to the world’s salvation. Nor is he the only one in our technological age to read the Bible itself as a tech manual, installation instructions for the final, fantastic upgrade of the universe.”

Gorenberg describes the three faiths’ approach to human history and the end of the world as the ‘divine novel’ with each group playing supporting roles in the others’ drama. As he puts it:

The theater of the End is triangular, and in the eyes of apocalyptic believers on all three sides, the great drama has begun. The sound system is hope and fear; each time an actor speaks, his words reverberate widely. Three scripts are being performed. The cast of Jewish messianists has starring roles in the Christian play; Jews and Christians alike have parts in the Muslim drama. What one sees as a flourish of rhetoric can be the other’s cue for a battle scene.

That drama, in the form of novels about the End Times, is great business these days particularly here in America. The author describes the phenomenal success of the “[Left Behind](#)” series that fleshes out premillennial dispensational theology for the masses by Jerry Jenkins and the Rev. Tim LaHaye, the latter a former protégé of such noted televangelists as Pat Robertson and Jerry Fallwell.

It is interesting to note that Rev. LaHaye, who was an official in Moral Majority before he commenced his career as an end-of-the-world novelist with \$11 million in sales, called Catholicism “a false religion.” In popularizing the dispensationalist position among Americans, Jenkins and LaHaye can only be equaled by the modern pioneer in this genre of apocalyptic literature, a New Orleans tugboat captain who attended the [premillennialist Dallas Theological Seminary](#), Hal Lindsey, the author of the phenomenally successful [The Late Great Planet Earth](#) of the early ‘70s. Mr. Lindsey, whose approach to Bible interpretation is to start at the end and work back to the beginning, has had to revise his bestseller a number of times. To give just one example, rather than give rise to the antichrist as early editions foretold, the Soviet Union chose to collapse. The fact that Lindsey has been proven spectacularly wrong in correct interpretation of Bible prophecies has not lessened his standing among Dispensationalist believers. He currently writes a [column](#) on Middle East affairs for Joseph Farah’s [WorldNetDaily web site](#), a column that could be confused with press releases from the hard-line Likud Party. [Mr. Farah, a noted born again Christian of Arab descent, who always supports Israel over his ethnic brethren and publishes any Zionist allegations no matter how absurd](#), makes us wonder what the Arabic equivalent for Uncle Tom is. But then as Gorenberg states, events in the Middle East have led “fundamentalist Christians in far parts of the globe to read news from Israel as printouts from God’s press office.” So Joseph Farah may just be God or Israel’s press officer.

## History of the Future

Mr. Gorenberg calls the reading of the future by believers in the Christian, Jewish, or Muslim traditions “the history of the future.” Really, what he has given us in *The End of Days* is a history of heresy from at least two of those traditions. He starts with what he described as two religious revolutionaries of the era of the building and destruction of Herod’s Temple. We are all familiar with one, Jesus, but the other, Yohanan ben Zakkai, a Pharisee, may need a little introduction to most Christians; both would see the other as leading a heresy from the true Old Testament religion among the children of Israel. In the uproar over the release of Mel Gibson’s movie, people forget that Jesus Christ, as recorded in the Gospels, not only had harsh words to say about the chief priests and the Temple cult but against the scribes and Pharisees as well, telling his hearers not to follow their example. Ben Zakkai was one of the Pharisees who foresaw the destruction of the Temple during the 70 A.D. revolt and whom Jewish tradition has it was smuggled out of encircled Jerusalem in a coffin. From his new base at the Palestinian town of Yavneh, ben Zakkai created what we today would know as Orthodox Judaism centered on worship services in the local synagogue with study of the written and oral law as paramount. While there were daily prayers for the coming of the Messiah who would restore the Temple cult (it was after all one vast slaughterhouse when it was in operation), the essence of modern Judaism was study. This study was codified by the intellectual descendants of ben Zakkai into the [two Talmuds \(Babylonian and Palestinian, the first having precedence\) containing the oral law \(Mishnah\) and rabbinic commentary \(Gemara\) with the latter having ultimate normative authority in the Jewish religion](#). As for these early rabbis, the openness to any type of “Judeo-Christian tradition” was slammed shut when, true to the words of Christ, his followers were expelled from the synagogue with the adoption in these first decades of the [Eighteen Benedictions](#), a prototype Jewish creed still recited in synagogue morning prayer services, whose Twelfth Benediction was actually a curse against “slanderers,” historically interpreted as the Jewish Christians:

And for those who slander us, let there be no hope, and let all wickedness vanish in an instant. May all your enemies, the enemies of your people, be quickly cut off, and as for the insolent may you quickly trouble, shatter, overthrow and humiliate them in our time. Blessed are you, Adonai, who shatters the enemies and humiliates the insolent.

Among the petitions for the end of the exile, return of the people to Jerusalem and restoration of the Temple cult, there is no room for the ever-discussed Judeo-Christian tradition from the rabbis’ perspective.

It is the source of no little confusion to both Jews and Christians today to understand, that just as Orthodox Judaism from the time of ben Zakkai has rejected Christianity as a heresy, so must authentic Christianity reject the Jewish religion from the time of the destruction of the Temple as a heresy as well. Let us explain exactly what we mean by this so there will be no confusion. In the recent years with the renewed interest in Islam after 9/11,

the words of British Catholic writer [Hilaire Belloc in \*The Great Heresies\*](#) that Islam is a Christian heresy have been recalled. Belloc meant that Muhammad's religion was in the Old and New Testament tradition but that since he was a pagan, he didn't really understand Christian concepts of the Trinity and the Church and so rejected Christ's divinity and created a competing religion.

In the same vein the late convert Father Elias Friedman, O.C.D. has shown in his [Jewish Identity](#) that the true Old Testament religion died with Christ on Good Friday as its logical fulfillment and rose with him on Easter Sunday as the Church. Therefore Christianity, centered on the One, True, Catholic Church is the Old Testament religion living on today. That is why the priest in one of the Eucharistic prayers calls Abraham "our father in faith."

Where then does this leave the Jewish religion as invented by Yohanan ben Zakkai? There is only one logical answer, although in today's politically correct atmosphere it is a most unwelcome answer. From Belloc and Friedman we can come to the conclusion that, just as Islam is a Christian heresy that rejects Christ's claim of divinity but honors him as a prophet, Judaism is a Christian heresy that rejects him entirely as an impostor in the vilest passages of the Talmud and other documents such as [The Truth about Jesus \(Toledot Yeshu\)](#) although it does retain a study of the Old Testament texts and some of the traditional feasts. It may be a contra-intuitive position, but Christianity is older than Judaism as it is the true Old Testament religion living on after the destruction of the Temple. However, neither Jews nor many Christians grasped this, so the next 20 centuries would become a map of various heresies from both religions.

Well, if the Jewish religion as we know it today is not a valid alternative approach to God, what about the people who call themselves Jewish from an ethnic or religious perspective? Aren't they the heirs of the people who lived in the Holy Land until dispersed by the Romans in the First Century? Weren't their ancestors the people to whom Jesus preached and who called for his death on the first Good Friday? Aren't people who call themselves Jews today the undisputed descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? Don't the people known as Jews at present have an undisputed title to territory in the Middle East under the terms granted to Abraham by the divine realtor as recorded in Genesis 15:18-21? Well, the answer to all these questions is, in the main, no.

What most gentiles fail to realize is that ethnically today the Jewish people are divided into two groups, one which historically dwelt in the Mediterranean basin known as the Sephardim and who spoke an early variety of Spanish known as Ladino. The other group the, today, far more numerous [Ashkenazim](#), came from Eastern Europe and spoke a German dialect known as "juedische Deutsch," or Yiddish. While in Hebrew the words [Sephardim](#) and Ashkenazim related to Spain and Germany respectively, it does not follow that these two groups only dwelt in those two countries. The historical explanation for the vast numbers of Yiddish speaking Jews in what was called the Pale of Settlement in the Czarist Empire was that these people were the descendants from the original exiles

from the Holy Land who migrated through the Western Roman Empire and then from France into Germany during the early Middle Ages. With anti-Jewish pogroms associated with the Crusades, these Jews were pushed further east into the Slavic lands, where they prospered. As the distinguished author Arthur Koestler, himself of Ashkenazi heritage, pointed out in his book [The Thirteenth Tribe](#), these peoples may have had a gentile rather than a Jewish ancestry.

The story of the conversion of this Turkic people to rabbinic Judaism is one of the most unknown stories of history. In apparently the eighth century A.D. their king, Bulan, desired to adopt one of the monotheistic faiths but, as his tribe dwelt in what is today southern Russia, felt that acceptance of Islam would put him under the control of the nearby Arabs and Christianity would cause him to become a vassal of the Byzantines. So he invited rabbis from Babylon to convert his people to Talmudic Judaism. The Khazar kingdom flourished for a few centuries until conquered by a Viking people, the [Varangians](#). Over time these Vikings would intermarry with the local Slavs to create the Russian ethnic group we know today.

The descendants of the Khazars moved west into the areas that became Poland, the Ukraine, where they became the Ashkenazi Jews, who under czarist persecution at the end of the 19th century decamped in large numbers for New York City and other places in the western world. The consequences of the origins of what are, probably, 90 percent of today's Jews are startling. It means that the quote of the crowd on the first Good Friday about the death of Jesus that "his blood be on us and our children," applies to no one living today, as the Second Vatican Council rightly stated. It also means that most of the inhabitants of the state of Israel are not the genetic descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, although they have displaced people who probably are. It also means that opposition to Israeli policies or to the pernicious influence on American culture by Jewish groups is not correctly termed anti-Semitism, because, for the most part, today's Jews are not Semites. Unfortunately, there is a great deal of anti-Semitism in America today, as we can see from statements from the U.S. government and the neo-conservative press; it is directed against the true Semites, the Arab peoples and in particular the Palestinians.

The fact that the national aspiration of a large number of Jewish people since the late 19th century have been aimed at setting up a large state in the Middle East is itself a heresy from the Jewish religion. About a generation after the death of Johanan ben Zakkai, the Jews of the Holy Land rose under Bar Kokhba against the Romans with even more disastrous results. After two political fiascos resulting in the dispersion of the Jewish people throughout the Roman Empire the rabbis imposed on their followers through the Talmud—according to Jewish researchers [Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky](#)—three oaths in which faithful Jews were 1) not to rebel against their gentile governments, 2) not massively return to the Holy Land before the coming of the Messiah and 3) not to pray too strongly for the coming of the Messiah. With the breakdown of the Jewish ghetto regime of the rabbis after the French Revolution, a secular ideology known as Zionism, the counterpart to the nationalistic movements of 19th century

Europe, spread among the newly emancipated Jews.

### Modern Messiah

The modern Messiah was an unbelieving Viennese journalist named [Theodor Herzl, who on seeing the outbursts of anti-Jewish feelings in France with the Dreyfus affair, felt that Jews needed a state of their own and was originally willing to settle for land in Uganda](#). However, the more traditional Jews of Eastern Europe redirected his quest towards the Holy Land and literature started to appear showing Moses leaning out of a cloud to pass his staff to Herr Herzl, who was not fluent in Hebrew. Zionism became a project of secularized Jews to prevent their assimilation into their host nations. As Gorenberg relates,

If modernity had you, your faith, Zionism, allowed you to remain a Jew, by reframing the Jews as a nation. The Bible became national literature; Hebrew would be the nation's vernacular, not the sacral tongue. From the start, Zionists claimed to be better Jews than the Orthodox: The Orthodox only prayed for redemption; Zionists were making it happen. Juggle both pieces of the idea: Zionism was messianism, but it was also something transformed.

Zionism was also the favorite Jewish group of another rabid nationalist group, the German Nazi Party, and the [Third Reich cooperated with Zionist organizations](#) in shipping unwilling German Jews to Palestine in the days before the start of the Second World War. Great Britain, who then occupied Palestine, and under terms of their Balfour Declaration was trying to do right by both the Jews and Arabs, was looking for an alternate colony for Jewish immigration, in places like Uganda or Madagascar. With the start of the war immigration was halted, the Nazis adopted other methods in dealing with the Jews of Eastern Europe, and Zionists occupied a disproportionate number of leadership positions in the *Judenrat* councils that were established in the ghettos as part of the Final Solution. The Revisionist Zionists, who ultimately became the Likud Party, in the first years of the struggle, were writing to Adolf Hitler suggesting that they make common war on the British. The Fuehrer turned them down as he wished to maintain the British Empire as a pillar of world stability, but the Zionist underground did attack their British protectors in Palestine as soon as the war was over.

Some of the Orthodox rabbinate got on board the Zionist train. A Lithuanian rabbi Avraham Kook, whose family would play a leading role in Israeli religious affairs, moved to the Holy Land early in the twentieth century and felt, in a classic example of *post hoc ergo propter hoc* thinking that

the fact that Jews were returning to their homeland... was proof that the divine redemption had actually begun. Secular Zionists pioneers who farmed the land and built new towns, he said, were carrying out God's will-unknowingly, despite themselves-and would eventually return to religion.

What the rabbis saw in Zionism was an antidote to the socialistic and communistic ideologies that were sweeping through Eastern European Jewry. British journalist Douglas Reed pointed out many of the leading Ashkenazi families contained both important Zionists and Communists. For writing about these undesired facts, Reed, a leading Fleet Street reporter of the World War II era, got banished from the world's press about the time of Israel's founding in what has come to be the usual treatment of people like Joseph Sobran or Patrick Buchanan in our day who dare to openly talk of ideological tendencies among Jews.

The ways of God are mysterious indeed; by the time the number of immigrant Jews reached a critical mass in the Holy Land, around 1929, a cycle of violence by both Jews and Arabs began at the flash-point shrines of the Temple Mount and Hebron, sacred to both Islam and Judaism, and that violence has continued unabated until the present.

By the way, what were the borders of the Land of Israel that was being 'redeemed' by Zionism? [The Likud Party under the leadership of Ariel Sharon in May 1993 committed Israel to "biblical borders."](#) What territory does that exactly encompass? According to Israel Shahak there are several variations, "the most far-reaching among them include the following areas within these borders: in the south, all of Sinai and a part of northern Egypt up to the environs of Cairo; in the east, all of Jordan and a large chunk of Saudi Arabia, all of Kuwait and a part of Iraq south of the Euphrates; in the north, all of Lebanon and all of Syria together with a huge part of Turkey (up to lake Van); in the west, Cyprus." This is a formula for a constant war of conquest of the entire Fertile Crescent coupled with the expulsion of the native peoples. It is interesting to note that the U.S. military currently occupies two of these nations and dominates three others, Turkey, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, that make up greater Israel within its 'biblical borders,' while neocon officials within the Bush administration are currently threatening to invade Syria, another country on this list. Many of the Muslims interviewed in Gorenberg's book appear paranoid, but when we see the ultimate dimensions of the Zionist project, their paranoia appears to have a large basis in fact. Of course the fact that the Zionist ideology is so near to total success is due in large measure to the imposition of American military might in the Middle East. To understand how that happens we have to turn from the history of Jewish heresy to the parallel track of Christian heresy.

It would appear that the basic heresy among Christians concerns the relationship of the Old Testament and its people, Israel, and the New Testament and the Church. This problem was apparent almost from the beginning when the second century figure, [Marcion](#), saw a major disjunction between the loving Father mentioned by Jesus and the stern Yahweh of the Old Testament. Marcion solved his dilemma by discarding all of the Old Testament as well as Luke and John's Gospels. At around the same time that Marcion was teaching his theories to the Christians of Rome, another sect, centering on [Montanus](#), taught the imminent return of Jesus Christ, spoke in tongues, prophesied and preached a rigorous discipline. Fast forward to the 11th century where a Benedictine abbot in Sicily, [Joachim of](#)

[Fiore](#), was also taken with the supposed differences in the two Testaments and came up with what probably is the prototype of all dispensational theories. Joachim taught that there were three distinct phases of revelation to humanity tied to each Person of the Blessed Trinity. The Old Testament was the age of the stern God the Father, the New Testament era, or Church Age as it might be called today, was the period of God the Son's loving ministry. Joachim also postulated a coming era the age of the Holy Ghost that would be the completion of the Spirit's action on the first Pentecost. What should be noted is that the Catholic Church condemned most of the theories of Marcion, Montanus, and Joachim as heretical.

## Reuchlin

Around the time of the Renaissance, not only was the study of Greek resumed in the Western world but Hebrew was studied as well. What is not well known today is that part of the Reformation was caused by the modernist scripture scholars of that day applying Jewish sources to the study of the Bible. One of the major German literary figures of the late fifteenth century, [Johannes Reuchlin](#), started the study of Hebrew under the direction of rabbis, and not only did some more grammatically correct rendering of the psalms but dabbled in the Cabbala, the Jewish book of black magic, as well. Among all the other cries for reform of the Church in Germany during that era, people like Reuchlin were showing that the rabbis had a different method of interpreting the scriptures than that of the official Church. This scholar became involved in a prolonged battle with a sincerely converted Jew, [Johann Pfefferkorn](#), over the anti-Christian elements in the Talmud. This debate was ultimately elevated to the pope, who decided that the rabbinic writings could be used as an aid to interpretation of scripture. By then, an alternative method of Bible interpretation as well as a novel theory of salvation by faith alone had been developed by Augustinian theologian Martin Luther, whose major assistant Melanchthon was Reuchlin's nephew. While Reuchlin rejected the Protestant position, his dabbling into Talmudic and Cabbalistic sources lit the flame on the dry fields of the German church and found a ready audience among the German clergy. As Hilaire Belloc has noted, at that point both the Catholics and the Reformers still believed in only one Church and Luther probably felt that his reforms would help convert the Jews. When they rejected his approaches, he took time from his polemical battles with Papists and Anabaptists to pen [Against the Jews and their Lies](#), something for which the Lutheran Churches have been doing public penance in recent decades.

Regardless of what Luther felt about the Jews, the Old Testament and things Jewish became central to a large part of Protestantism and in particular the Protestantism of the British Isles. A large minority of these people never accepted the Elizabethan compromise that resulted in the Anglican Church as a mid- point between the traditional Catholicism and the Reform and felt there were still too many popish remainders in both church and society like the horrible feast of Christmas. Early in the 17th century many of this party, the Puritans, felt that England was irreformable and decided to create a New England in the new lands across the Atlantic where they could impose the Old Testament law code on a modern society and show that [God was](#)

[prospering his elect by working on December 25th](#). These first emigrants left the mother country too soon to fight alongside the Puritan party in England, which would come to power in a few decades under [Oliver Cromwell](#), behead the king, admit the Jews to the country, and conduct a war of ethnic cleansing against the Catholics in Ireland. The Puritans ultimately failed in their attempt to create an Old Testament theocracy in Merry Olde England, but a love of things Jewish would long remain in that society. As a way of drawing the Jewish immigrants together with the native Puritans, the [medieval English stonemason's guild was taken over and given a large body of mythology dealing with the construction of Solomon's Temple in what the world would come to know as the Free and Accepted Masons](#), a long-term official enemy of the Catholic Church.

In the New World a new nation was developing, and, as G. K. Chesterton would say, [America had the soul of a church](#). However, this famous British convert to Catholicism needs to be corrected on this point, America has the soul of a heretical church. In New England, by the year 1800, the solvent of the Enlightenment had been working away at the foundations of the Old Testament theocracy. In the generation after the Revolution, Puritan institutions like Harvard College adopted Unitarianism, and their now liberal beliefs had come to center on “the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man and the neighborhood of Boston.” The Athens of America was becoming estranged from the theological theories of Jonathan Edwards but would become the center of whatever American progressive theories would be current. The older Puritan theories of the Old Testament theocracy were migrating with the frontier line to the South and West.

The first stop of the Puritans' “psychic highway” after they migrated west of Lake Champlain was upstate New York, which, in the early decades of the 19th century, was the trend-setting center of America, to which only southern California can compare in our own day. The region got the name “[the burned over district](#)” due to the incredible number of religious and intellectual movements that got their start there. Charles Finney, a lawyer turned preacher started modern American revivalism with tent meetings throughout the area beginning in 1825. That generation's version of the New Age movement, Spiritualism, was started with the Fox sisters' table rapping in Newark, New York in 1848, but soon involved a huge following throughout the country. Feminism also got its start that same year in nearby Seneca Falls with the first woman's suffrage convention.

A uniquely Protestant heresy got its start there too. Based on the alleged revelations from the angel Moroni near Rochester, Joseph Smith claimed that the American Indian tribes were actually the ten lost tribes of Israel, about whose fate generations of Old Testament readers had fixated on and that Jesus Christ had appeared to them as well. Mormonism is the Protestant heresy par excellence as it adds books of scripture to the *sola scriptura* faith. While Smith and his colleague Brigham Young would ultimately lead their Church of the Latter Day Saints or Mormons to what is now Utah, they were both sons of New England immigrants to upstate New York, as well as Freemasons, and their Temple ceremonies incorporate many lodge rituals, not to mention their resurrection of Old Testament polygamy. However, [the](#)

[Masons, whose rituals had been a major part of American public life in the Revolutionary era, suffered a setback when they murdered William Morgan in Batavia, New York in 1826 for having published a book exposing Masonic doctrine.](#) This would give rise to the first of the modern political groups, the Anti-Masonic Party, that would later become an element in the future Republican Party.

However, the biggest spiritual event in America in the first half of the 19th century centered around a long-standing Protestant pastime of reading the prophecies of Daniel and Ezekiel together with Revelation in order to come up with the date for the Second Coming of Christ. [By 1820, William Miller of upstate New York, a farmer and War of 1812 veteran, had read the scriptures and came up with the date of 1843 for Christ's return.](#) Over the next two decades he traveled the country and amassed a large number of followers. In 1843 he discovered that his date was off by one year but set October 22, 1844, the Jewish Day of Atonement, as the definitive date for the end of the world, and many of his followers sold all they had and prepared to meet the Lord on that day. When “the Great Disappointment” happened, many of Miller’s followers drifted back to the established churches, but a hard-core of believers under the leadership of Ellen White explained that Christ was first returning in heaven and proceeded to establish the [highly Judaizing Seventh Day Adventist Church with worship on the Saturday Sabbath as well as keeping the kosher dietary laws as central elements of their beliefs.](#) This body would also have a profound animus against the Catholic Church, something which is typical of groups that obsess on applying the Old Testament today.

In the British Isles, at about the time Prophet Miller was spreading the word of the imminent Second Coming, something similar was taking place. Around 1830 a Scottish preacher by the name of Edward Irving was preaching a premillennial rapture of the saints based on the writings of a South American Jesuit Manuel de Lacunza. His theories were also aided by a local Scottish mystic named Margaret Macdonald; their theories on the rapture also called for the return of the Jews to the Holy Land to reestablish their kingdom when the elect were caught up in the clouds to meet Jesus. The theory quickly spread to the Protestants of Ireland who were at this period going through something of an identity crisis. While the Protestant ascendancy in the Emerald Isle were a major part of the British Establishment centering around the Dublin Castle government since the period of French Revolution, the conservative governments in London were trying to avoid an uprising by the Irish peasantry by coming to a *modus vivendi* with the peasants’ Church through repeal of the Penal Laws and establishment of a seminary at Maynooth to train Roman priests. This created a bitter controversy among Irish Protestants with the ultimate disestablishment of the Church of Ireland coming in later decades. The word — much beloved of the spelling bees of my youth — [antidisestablishmentarianism](#) dates from this controversy. Irving’s doctrines about the rapture and the imminent Second Coming found an eager follower in [John Nelson Darby](#), a Church of Ireland cleric whose initial ministry was in evangelizing Romanists and who ultimately founded the Plymouth Brethren sect. It isn’t clear if Darby was instrumental later in setting up the

Church of Ireland's soup kitchens for the starving Irish during the Great Famine where they would be fed if they converted to Protestantism.

In addition to their belief in the premillennial rapture of true Christians, what Irving, Darby and the latter Dispensationalists all have in common, according to Dave MacPherson, is the emphasis on "the 'distinction' between the church and Israel. They define 'Israel' as ethnic Jews or Israelites. [They insist that this 'distinction' necessarily becomes an end-time 'dichotomy' \(a physical separation\) between the church and ethnic Jews, that God has to remove the church from earth before He can again deal with the later group.](#)" The mindset of the premillennial dispensationalists would find expression in America in Judaizing groups such as the Adventists, through the efforts of the [morally degenerate C. I. Scofield](#), who would import Irving and Darby's theories in his notes to the Scofield Reference Bible and which would also be a prominent feature of [The Fundamentals series of Bible commentaries](#) funded by American petroleum magnates in the first years of the 20th century. Early in the 20th century, a Philadelphian named [Clarence Larkin](#) reduced all of Irving, Darby, and Scofield's theology to a series of [schematic diagrams](#). God's dealings with humanity are shown as a discontinuous series of actions known as dispensations, not as the eternal divine plan. The Church goes up when Jesus comes down, and the Jews go back to the Holy Land; there is no way this theory can be squared with Catholic theology. Larkin's diagrams of impending Armageddon are all black and white; what a pity they couldn't be merged with the color coding of another Pennsylvanian, Secretary of Homeland Security, Tom Ridge so that the End Times could be mapped in living color.

The Dispensationalist message was also propagated through a series of educational institutions like Chicago's Moody Bible Institute, the Philadelphia College of the Bible and Hal Lindsey's alma mater, the aforementioned Dallas Theological Seminary. As the Zionist movement was gaining steam around the year 1900, the followers of Darby and Scofield would soon become these Jews' favorite Christians.

But the basic question is just how Christian are premillennial dispensationalists? They claim to have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior and want to spread their witness among all the unsaved, particularly Catholics. As Gorenberg relates in his book, one of the most active groups of Christian Zionists these days is [Pastor Chuck Smith and his Calvary Chapel](#) of Costa Mesa, California. Actually Calvary Chapel is a fast growing franchise church now spreading throughout the country like the Burger King of churches. In Philadelphia, most of the local Calvary Chapel's pastors and congregation are former Catholics; no doubt John Nelson Darby would be proud.

### **Really Christians?**

But are they really Christians? The answer is, despite their protestations to the contrary, no. Premillennial dispensationalism has been called "God's Plan B" due to the fact that, with their classic emphasis on the Old Testament,

Jesus Christ came to earth to become the king of Israel. The Jews rejected his claim; what was He to do now? Well [according to their theory, the Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity and the Word through whom the universe was made, had to improvise a back-up plan known as the Church, which involved the gentiles. At some point the present dispensation, known as the church parenthesis, will come to an end and the gentile believers will be raptured to the clouds so that God can start dealing with the Jews again as He originally planned.](#) So the answer for any Catholic to the dispensationalist's question about trusting Jesus is, "why should you?" According to the premillennial dispensationalist theory, Jesus didn't know what he was on earth to do. The premillennial dispensationalist Jesus isn't worthy of belief; no wonder the Jews love the dispensationalists.

So we come back to the present, where groups of alleged Christians and Jews are actively seeking to jump-start the end times—each supremely confident that they have God's ear. What we see is that President G. W. Bush is right; there is an axis of evil at work in the world today; only in theological terms, it is the fusion of Dispensationalists and Zionists; from a political perspective it is a Republican-Likud coalition. We can also see in the vicious attacks on Americans who oppose the current administration's Middle East adventures by Jewish and Christian neocons in the government and the media, the outline of a heresy hunt. Does anyone really believe that, if given the power, a leading Dispensationalist like Attorney General John Ashcroft would not willingly send all dissenters to Guantanamo with the belief that he was furthering God's kingdom here on earth? The other night I saw one of America's leading Dispensationalist preachers, Rev. Pat Robertson, complain loudly on his television show, that American troops might be withdrawn from Iraq before they could impose "democracy" and the Muslim clergy would take over. Rev. Robertson said we should impose democracy as "we have the troops and weapons on the ground over there." Apparently the Dispensationalist version of the Bible contains a few more verses in the Book of Proverbs than does the Catholic version like, "might makes right," "the end justifies the means," and "all power flows from the barrel of a gun."

One would want to ask Rev. Pat if his vision of "democracy" in Iraq flows from Old Testament theocracy or from the "liberty, equality, fraternity" of the Paris Commune that his neocon advisers are more familiar with. We should also ask Rev. Robertson what he has against the Muslim clergy: don't they want to influence the moral tone of their society, have women in modest public attire and have the government prohibit the sale of alcohol? Isn't this what the American Dispensationalist clergy did when they had power several decades ago? So what's the big difference here?

### **Heretical Ideas**

Unfortunately American Catholics are not immune to these heretical ideas. Recently the U.S. Catholic Conference's secretary for Jewish relations, [Dr. Eugene Fisher, could tell the \*Jewish Week\* newspaper on July 23, 2002](#) in response to a Vatican document:

If you put off the moment that Jews will come to recognize Jesus as the Messiah until the end of time, then we don't need to work or pray for the conversion of Jews to Christianity.... God already has the salvation of Jews figured out, and they accepted it on Sinai, so they are OK. Jews are already with the Father.... We do not have a mission to the Jews, but only a mission with the Jews to the world. The Catholic Church will never again sanction an organization devoted to the conversion of the Jews. That is over, on doctrinal, biblical and pastoral grounds. Finito.

These are interesting comments. Like the rabbis of the Talmud, Dr. Fisher is saying that the Jews have no need of the person and work of Jesus Christ. His life and death did not impact the Jewish people in the slightest. About what happened on Mt. Sinai, Fisher, like the rabbis, conveniently glosses over the Genesis story of the Israelites worshiping the golden calf and how angry Yahweh and Moses were about the incident. But never mind. Neither Jewish mass murderers like Leon Trotsky or Ariel Sharon, nor Jewish swindlers like Ivan Boesky, George Soros, or the Russian oligarchs who destroyed that country's economy, nor Jewish Hollywood pornographers or abortionists—none of them need Jesus Christ because they've been saved—both individually and collectively—since Sinai. Catholics may question why the American bishops have kept Dr. Fisher in so prominent a position for so long since he clearly is using it as a basis to teach heresy. As of late Eugene Fisher has been very busy working for Abe Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League in the yearlong “scholarly” attack on Mel Gibson's movie.

Unfortunately Eugene Fisher has many imitators throughout the Catholic bureaucracies in this country and the lightning rod directing the fire of the proponents of “Catholic-Jewish dialogue” is *The Passion of the Christ*. One of the things we here at *Culture Wars* have been remiss at is getting our message out to young Catholics who get all their information from electrons and not dead trees. Not that I am making excuses for that, but it just is the way things are. There is a whole series of Catholic blogs (web logs) linked in a web ring known as [St. Blog's Parish](#) written by and directed towards these young Catholics. While many of them are refreshingly orthodox, when they do stray into political commentary they seem, in the main, to have had neocon brain surgery in the recent past, and they end up sounding like Anne Coulter or David Frum.

One of the prime examples of this is the web site and blog maintained by Dr. William Cork the head of the Young Adult Ministry for the Diocese of Houston. Bill Cork is certainly a prolific web writer maintaining a site with his [writings](#) as well as a [blog](#) titled “*ut unum sint... iustus ex fide vivit: an ecumenical blog.*” Actually it might be better titled press releases from the ADL/AJC for Catholics, but more on that later. Dr. Cork does have an interesting background having been raised in the Judaizing Seventh Day Adventist Church, before becoming a Lutheran minister as an adult. Cork then became a chaplain, a job he truly loved, with an Army reserve unit and took the basic chaplain's course when the school was here at Ft. Monmouth,

New Jersey. He noted that the standard Protestant service was not appealing to the Lutheran and Episcopal student chaplains with their liturgical traditions, and he started to attend the Catholic Mass. Shortly after that, he was received into the Church and had to resign his chaplain's commission, so his conversion did cost him. Apparently his wife and children remain Adventists.

Dr. Cork, as mentioned above, has a current position in Houston helping form the faith of young adult Catholics. The only problem is the faith that he's forming them with. Bill Cork seems to be on a one-man crusade against what he calls "right-wing Catholics" who have to be constantly checked for anti-Semitism and what he calls a "replacement theology." What he apparently means by that is the notion that the Catholic Church has replaced the Jews as God's People and that these people, as the unquestionable descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, are true Semites and currently in a valid relationship with God. So Catholics who adopt Bill Cork's position would definitely be in ecumenical relations with Dispensationalists and Adventists. In a very long article posted on his web site, "[Anti-Semitism and the Catholic Right](#)," Cork aims his fire at Robert Sungenis of Catholic Apologetics International who had taken exception to a statement from the Vatican on Catholic-Jewish relations, the one that gave rise to Eugene Fisher's comments above. Sungenis and CAI are, according to the Young Adult Minister for the Houston Diocese, the carrier of the dread anti-Semitic bacillus, as transmitted directly from people like Fathers Denis Fahey and Charles Coughlin. In fact, Cork relates, Sungenis on his web site has plagiarized from Nazi sources in stating that President Franklin D. Roosevelt was of Jewish ancestry. As his source on Father Coughlin, [Cork refers to \*Radio Priest: Charles Coughlin the Father of Hate Radio\* by Donald I. Warren \(New York: The Free Press, 1996\)](#). Having written an article on Father Coughlin in this magazine, I was very familiar with the book. Obviously Bill Cork hadn't read it when he was trying to throw mud on "right-wing Catholic" Robert Sungenis. If he had he would have read on p.139 that the Roosevelt Jewish ancestry was well publicized in the American press in 1935 and that the Nazis got it from both American gentile and Jewish sources, and that it was believed by the leading rabbi of the day, Stephen S. Wise.

But that was then, and this is now. For the past year Bill Cork's blog has been a running attack on Mel Gibson, Hutton Gibson and *The Passion of the Christ*. For a man with a Doctorate of Ministry degree, Cork has an amazingly simple worldview: the Gibsons and the movie are bad; Abe Foxman and the ADL are good. Dr. Cork is currently speaking at synagogues in the greater Houston area, so no doubt he has a brilliant future ahead of him; he could replace Dr. Fisher at the USCC when the latter retires. No doubt he hasn't read *Culture Wars* lately, but if he does maybe, based on what we've discussed in this article, he can find another descriptive for those Catholics who don't feel Jews are saved by their nature and don't accept Israeli empire building or Jewish domination of American culture other than "anti-Semite." Why does the bishop of Houston keep a man who feels that Jews don't have to convert to Jesus Christ in a sensitive position with the formation of young adults in his diocese?

So the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are saddled up and ready to ride out from the Temple Mount throughout the Middle East and the world. The fact that their saddles were made in the U.S.A. by both Jewish and Christian zealots who felt they were doing God's work is something that should cause us all to stop for a moment's reflection. The fact is we might be living in the End Times. When zealots feel they know the mind of God and can force His hand, they might end up with a lot more than they bargained for. What a shock if at the Great White Throne Judgment, those who sincerely believed that they were establishing God's kingdom here on earth find out they were actually working for the other side. 

[Thomas J. Herron](#) is a frequent contributor to Culture Wars.

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#### Further Reading:

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- On C. I. Scofield,; .Scofield: *The Man behind the Myth*, <http://www.poweredbychrist.homestead.com/files/cyrus/scofield.htm>
- For Clarence Larkin's Dispensationalist Charts: <http://web.mountain.net/morton/charts.htm>



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