Propaganda and the Armageddon Factor in Canadian and American Politics

By

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Abstract

This paper discusses the use of Christian beliefs about the Second Coming of Christ as political propaganda by the Canadian writer Marci McDonald. Although her book *The Armageddon Factor* first appeared in 2008 its impact is still felt in Canada. An internet search soon shows that she is an active speaker and campaigner against Canadian Conservatives and that many other speakers have taken up her ideas. These criticisms are based on the scaremongering tactics that centre on the supposed danger of evangelical Christianity as a motivator of Conservatives who are said to adhere to unreasonable beliefs about the coming end of the world. The article discusses her claims and shows them to be false.

Introduction: The Fundamentalist Bogy Man

Canadian Liberal writer Warren Kinsella is proud that he was called “the Prince of Darkness” by both his office staff and opponents during the time he was a political assistant to the Leader of the Official Opposition, Jean Chrétien. Later the title stuck as Kinsella moved up within the Liberal Party establishments and Chrétien became the Prime Minister of Canada (Kinsella 2007:26-27).

He seems proudest of all about the way he went about destroying Chrétien’s political opponent “Stockwell Day and his Reform Alliance Party” during the General Election Campaign of 2000 (Kinsella 2007:78-81). One of the keys to his strategy was the suggestion that Day was a dummy which thanks to a number of gaffs by Day was a great approach to take (Kinsella 2007:94).

Nevertheless, two months before the election Chrétien seemed to have acquired the image of “a criminal, a simpleton, or both” and things did not look good. Then “the clouds parted, an angelic chorus sang and a gift descended from heaven” by way of a Canadian Broadcasting documentary on Day that drew attention to his Christian fundamentalism. This documentary “transformed” the election campaign (Kinsella 2007:137).

Suddenly, Kinsella had the key to destroying Day’s carefully crafted attempts to present himself as a viable choice for Prime Minister. Better still the documentary claimed that Day supported a fairly crude form of Biblical Creationism that involved belief in a six day creation around six thousand years ago. The informant who made this claim also said that in a fairly recent college discussion Day had said “Adam and Eve are real people” who “co-existed with dinosaurs” and had suggested that “creation science” should be taught in public schools (Kinsella 2007:137-139).

This claim gave Kinsella the break he needed. Shortly afterwards on one of Canada’s most popular television shows Kinsella said, “I want to remind Mr. Day that *The Flintstones* was not a documentary.” To drive home his point, he produced “a large, stuffed, purple Barney” from a bag he had brought into the studio and held it up to the camera (Kinsella 2007:143). The game was over. Day had lost and became a laughing stock all because of the symbolic effect of a stuffed kids toy.

Day’s supporters raged against the “dirty trick,” but it worked and Day chance of becoming Prime Minister was permanently lost (Kinsella 2007:144-145). Has a stuffed toy ever effected an election campaign to such a dramatic extent before of after this? It seems not.

The strategy was brilliant. Armageddon struck the Reformed Alliance. Following the defeat of Stockwell Day and the Reformed Alliance, a far more formidable challenge to Canada's Liberal establishment appeared in the person of Stephen Harper.

Labelling Prime Minister Stephen Harper

Unlike his predecessor, the next leader of Canada's Conservatives, Stephen Harper, did not wear his religion on his sleeve. In fact, this hard-nosed economist was a very different type of person to the former preacher Stockwell Day. Nevertheless, a few years later, during his first term as Canadian Prime Minister, which began in 2006, someone, Warren or one of his acolytes, seems to have remembered the Liberal success in tarring Day as an obscurantist fundamentalist. The problem facing anyone wanting to use the same strategy against Harper was that he did not proclaim his religious convictions, and unlike Day went to the University of Calgary, not a Bible School.

Such trivial matters do not deter a good spin-doctor and it seems that a concerted effort was made to create the impression that at heart Harper was either just another fundamentalist or that his fundamentalist supporters controlled his actions. The “at heart he is a fundamentalist” attack on Harper began with the publication of Marica McDonald’s *The Armageddon Factor* which appeared early in 2008 long before the Federal Election of that year.

The direct impact of the book on the election campaign is hard to measure because, despite an enormous amount of media attention, the book received almost uniform condemnation from informed reviewers as well as on radio and television talk

shows and discussions. As a result, it soon appeared destined for oblivion. Subsequently, Harper won the election the book seemed dead and buried.

Then a strange thing happened. After Harpers third election victory on 2nd May 2011 various media personalities and newspapers began to warn about the "dangers" of the Conservative Government's policies towards Israel. In doing so, they invoked McDonald's work as though it was an authoritative academic assessment of Mr. Harper's policies and beliefs.

Fear as a Propaganda Tool

Marci McDonald's *The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada* (2010) highlights the supposed role Christian beliefs about the end times play in Canadian politics. A best-selling author, and prize winning journalist, Ms. McDonald's work applies the anti-fundamentalist arguments of American authors like Chris Hedges (2005) to the Canadian situation.

Essentially, both McDonald and Hedges claimed that "extreme right" Christians, who Hedges labeled "fascists" and McDonald labeled "Christian nationalists," were conspiring to gain undue influence over politics and society in both Canada and the United States. Both authors agreed that this new form of fascist nationalism can be described as "Christian Reconstruction" (Hedges 2005:10-11; McDonald 2010:11).

This term refers to a movement founded by the Armenian-American Dr. Rousas John Rushdoony (1916-2001) in the 1960's. Then, without carefully defining their terms, or providing specific citations, they linked genuine fears of an atomic war, illustrated in

films like the German television classic *Heimat 3*, to the Christian Reconstruction movement (Hedges 2005:12; McDonald 2010:11).

In doing so they argue that, Christians who become involved in government do so because of a “conviction that the end times foretold in the book of Revelation are at hand” and that this “conviction” drives their political involvement (McDonald 2010:11). Therefore, conservative Christians are said to expect “Christ returning to earth at the head of an avenging army” anytime soon (Hodges 2005:4). This belief Hedges interprets as evidence of a dangerous "theology of despair” because “for many the apocalypse can’t happen soon enough” (Hedges 2005:186).

The belief that a longing for the end times motivates Christian politicians lead MaDonald to tell her readers that such people are “Braced for an impending apocalypse.” This means their political agenda is dominated the fact that they expect the imminent "end the world and little else”. Such thinking, she says “informs” conservative Christian “support for a foreign policy that empowers the most hawkish and expansionist forces in Israel at the expense of Middle East peace” (McDonald 2010:11). Hedges shares this view with regard to American conservatives (Hedges 2005:145;188-189).

Behind this “apocalyptic fantasy,” according to both writers are John Nelson Derby (1800-1882), and Hal Lindsey (b. 1929) whose ideas Tim LaHaye (1926-2016) and Jerry Bruce Jenkins (b. 1949) popularize in their end time phenomenally successful *Left Behind* series of novels and films (Hedges 2005:186-190; McDonald 2010:61-63; 314-315). The teachings of these men Hedges and McDonald tell their readers involve what they describe a belief in “the Rapture.” They then explain that this belief involves

the idea that before life becomes totally unbearable on earth Christ will return “in the clouds” to rescue true Christians from the impending Hell on earth (Hedges 2005:47-48;186-187; McDonald 2010:3; 61-62; 326-327). Such a belief, McDonald identifies as dispensationalism (McDonald 2010:61).

What is surprising about these two books is that while both authors claim that belief in an imminent apocalypse motivates an important political lobby**,** they make no attempt to engage with or clarify the nature of these beliefs, Nor do they help their readers understand why anyone accepts this type of religion which is presented as totally absurd (Hedges 2005: 47; 90-91; 186-190; McDonald 2010:3; 62; 230; 314-316; 327). .

Their avoidance of an in-depth discussion of millenarian ideas begins with McDonald’s statement that she is writing about is “an extremist vision of Christianity – one ultimately shaped by what I call ‘the Armageddon factor’” (McDonald 2010:12). Yet nowhere does she explain what this catchy phrase really means or how some people derive it from the Bible.

Although McDonald is a good rhetorician and strikes a nerve by confronting readers with the claim that both Canadian and American governments are increasingly guided by the views of fanatics, nowhere is the connection between the assumed impending Armageddon and politics really spelt out. All these and similar writers do is confidently assert that there is a link between the apocalyptic novels of LeHaye and Jenkins and the Christian Reconstruction movement of Rousas John Rushdoony, because all three writers reject unrestricted abortion and gay marriage. So vague was this argument that the advent of the Obama Administration made little difference to the

argument because every attack on Obama by his critics simply seemed to confirm the power of “conservatives” over American policies (Hedges 2005:7-13; McDonald 2010:3-12).

The weakness of apocalyptic scaremongering

The basic problem with these types of argument is that while it is true that Rushdoony encouraged Christians to become involved in politics and advocated the reconstruction of society on the basis of Biblical teachings forging a link between his ideas and the expectation of an impending apocalypse is difficult. This is because Rushdoony explicitly rejected all forms or pre-millennialism which he saw as incompatible with the teachings of the Bible (Rushdoony 1977). Clearly, something is wrong with the arguments of critics like Hedges and McDonald. This is because supporters of theological beliefs involving Christian Reconstruction strongly reject pre-millennialism. Yet, neither McDonald, Hedges, nor any other writer who takes up this theme gives any indication that they are aware of this problem.

The problem of sources

Once doubts arise about the type of interpretation offered by the likes of Hedges and McDonald questions about the sources they use soon follows. At first sight, or reading, both Hedges and McDonald appear to offer solid evidence to support their claims. Unlike books where the authors vent their own viewpoint on particular topics both authors provide their readers with “sources” that suggest reliability

McDonald avoids direct footnotes by ending her book with a section entitled "Source Notes" where she claims "*The Armageddon Factor* is based largely on original material gleaned from scores of interviews with more than a hundred subjects, amounting to more than 300 hours of recorded conversations between April 2006 and December 2009." She then adds "Much of the other material came from attending dozens of conferences … publications, websites, blogs and CDs or DVDs." Then she lists what she calls "two even-handed histories by Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion* … and *Not By Politics Alone* …" as particularly helpful alongside books by Richard John Neuhaus and Michael Cromatie, Michelle Goldberg, Chris Hedges, and Kelvin Phillips (McDonald 2010: 364).

She also says that "For historical data and an understanding of the Canadian religious right", she used Robert K. Burkinshaw's *Pilgrims in Lotus Land* (1995), Ronald S. Dart's *The Eagle and the Ox* (2006), John H. Redekop's *Politics Under God* (2007) and Lloyd Mackey's *More Faithful than We Think* (2007) alongside "other books that are cited in the notes to the relevant chapters" (McDonald 2010: 365).

When examined Burinshaw's book is genuine enough although it only deals with British Columbia from 1917 to 1981. That is hardly contemporary Canada. On the other hand, Dart's *The Eagle and the Ox* is an evangelical Christian who studied at Regent College in Vancouver, and like the professors there who were his teachers, objected to Christian Zionism. Redekop's book presents a Mennonite theory of politics while Mackey's is a personal reflection on Canadian politics and politicians. In short, none of these books provided solid support for McDonald's claims.

Following this introductory section McDonald discusses the preface and each subsequent chapter in detail mentioning books, people and places as she does so. These initial comments and "notes to the relevant chapters" are supposed to be the evidence upon which she bases her argument. The problem is that throughout her notes everything is vague. Page numbers are not give nor are we provided with times and dates, the context of interviews, or even exact quotes from them. In other words all of her sources are pseudo-sources that may or may not accurately reflect what she was told or read. Most importantly, the reader has no way of checking on any of her claims nor is it possible that anyone who was supposedly interviewed by her could pin down an exact statement to confirm what they actually said or what McDonald implies they said or thought. Thus, McDonald's so-called "original material" and "data," or at least her use of it, is a sham that misdirects her readers from the fact that she makes assertions without proving the necessary evidence.

Hedges work is no better. Although he helps the reader considerably by using traditional, academic style footnotes when examined they lead nowhere or are entirely leave out key statements. For example, Hedges writes about "Those who join forces with the Antichrist in the *Left Behind* series, true to LaHaye's conspiracy theories, include the United Nations, The European Union, Russia, Iraq, all Muslims, the media, liberals, freethinkers and 'international bankers'" (Hedges 2006:190).

There are two problems with this statement. First Hedges fails to provide any evidence, or footnote, to support this claim. Second, it is untrue. This is because, as Darryl Jones points out in his excellent analysis of this series, the books "are not at all points reactionary. They do, in fairness, attempt to offer a multicultural global

perspective which eschews the kinds of racism traditionally associated with evangelical Christianity … This enables the books to step outside the usual demonization of Muslims …" by making some of the heroes, who defend Christians (Jones 2006:108-109). Jones's detailed analysis of the *Left Behind* series leaves the reader wondering whether Hedges actually read any of these books other than their dust covers.

The same comment goes for McDonald's treatment of the *Left Behind* books. All she really says about the novels is that they "provided the rational for the Christian right's sense of urgency about effecting political change – the conviction that, with Armageddon looming, the faithful have not a moment to lose in preparing the way for the Second Coming of Christ" (McDonald 2010: 3). Once again, the problem with this is that the novels say almost the exact opposite.

Christians are not expected to prepare the way for Christ's coming. All the novels talk about is how some people who continue to live on earth after Jesus has rescued Christians from "the Tribulation," discover the truth of Christianity and become true believers who battle the evil forces now ruling earth. Further, how this belief in the end times translates into the type of politics carried on by the so-called Christian-Right is not clear.

The Politics of Christian Millennialism

Marci McDonald is convinced, and attempts to convince her readers, that the "conviction that the end times foretold in the book of Revelation" are at hand propel an "aggressive and organizationally savvy band of conservative Christians" to impose an "extremist vision of Christianity" on the Canadian Government to the detriment of

ordinary people (McDonald 2010:11-12). Chris Hedges is equally convinced that apocalyptic fanaticism drives what he sees as a new form of fascism bent on taking over America (Hedges 1995:185-211).

Similarly, as early as 1989 American journalist Sara Diamond began warning Americans about the dangers of what she calls the “Christian Right.” Like McDonald, who probably took the idea from her, Diamond claimed that the apocalyptic beliefs of members of this movement drove them to attempt to remould America in their own image (Diamond 1989:130-136). So too, but with far more sophistication, and a certain amount of understanding, Michelle Goldberg deplores what she calls the “rise of Christian Nationalism” in America. Nevertheless, she too pushes the apocalyptic scare button this time with the twist that Christian pre-millennialism is deeply rooted in anti-Semitism because during the battle of Armageddon unbelieving Jews will be destroyed (Goldberg 2006:72).

What these and a growing number of other writers have in common is their claim that pre-millennial beliefs have led American evangelicals to engage in politics. At first sight, the arguments of these writers appear plausible.

Closer examination reveals the weakness of the case these people, who will be called apocalyptic scaremongers, make. While it is true that many evangelicals, including the people cited in these books, are pre-millennial in their beliefs the link between belief in the return of Christ and the supposed political implications of these beliefs is hard to prove. Contrary to the claims made in these books the evidence does not support their case.

People who believe that the world is about to end in terms of the type of dispensational and pre-millennial teachings promoted by John Nelson Derby and evangelical Christians actually tend to avoid involvement in politics and the affairs of this world. Instead, they concentrate on “saving souls” and preparing for the world to come. As George Marsden points out historically Americans who accepted dispensational theology “had little or no room for social or political progress” instead they were “characteristically pessimistic” and “never fully developed or articulated their political views” (Marsden 2006:66). In fact, they were “not much interested in social or political questions” (Marsden 2006:67).

Only when politics directly impinged on their ability to spread the gospel as they understood it, or when they found their views contradicted by what was taught in schools, did such people take an interest in politics. Even then they were to be found on both sides of most political issues (Marsden 2006:206-211). In fact, contrary to writers like McDonald and Hedges only a very small number of evangelicals actually embrace a far right agenda even if some of them are prolific writers (Marsden 2006:232-236).

Significantly, Marsden argues that Hal Lindsey’s *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970) is “tour de force” presentation “of fundamentalism in its apolitical mode.” This he contrasts” with the “political postmillennialism of the Christian Reconstructionist Movement” which he observes “has never had a wide following” (Marsden 2006:248-249).

Of course, it can be argued that while it may be true such beliefs are marginal, if a dedicated group of people hold them strongly enough, they may be able to exercise a disproportionate amount of influence over American and Canadian politicians (Goldberg

2006:8-12; McDonald 2010:7; 355-360). Therefore, it is important to look at the available survey and related data to see if evangelical Christians who hold pre-millennial or Reconstructionist beliefs are a significant voting block or lobby group. In short do they exercise a significant influence on the political process in Washington or Ottawa?

The political influence of Evangelical Christians in North America

Probably the first scholarly work to use survey and other data to examine the political influence of evangelical Christians, particularly those associated with the Religious Right, was written by Clyde Wilcox. He is a Professor of Government at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. His book, *Onward Christian Soldiers? The Religious Right in American Politics* is a well-documented study packed with data. Wilcox begins by telling his readers that although he “grew up in rural West Virginia” where “many of his family and friends” were and are fundamentalist Christians he “came of age politically in the late 1960s and was shaped by the civil rights, antiwar, feminist, and environmental movements." He goes on "I strongly oppose most of the policy agenda of the Christian Right…” (Wilcox 1996:xi).

What follows is a detailed analysis of the social and political culture of evangelical Christianity that he carefully contrasts with the beliefs and attitudes of both mainline Christians and secular Americans. As a result, he sees evangelical Christian involvement in American life in a broad context where it is carefully studied.

Unlike McDonald, Hedges, or any of the other apocalyptic scaremongers, Wilcox shares George Marsden’s view that the dominance of pre-millennialism among North American evangelical Christians “created a strong resistance to political involvement”

(Wilcox 1996:27) even though some writers, like Hal Lindsey, were later to mix "premillennialism with far-right, often paranoid politics" (Wilcox 1996:35). Nevertheless, he observes, that by the 1990's "many Christian Right leaders" were "adopting a more postmillennialist theology" which was particularly popular among Charismatic Christians (Wilcox 1996:44).

Interestingly, although he identifies a drift towards post-millennial theology among American evangelicals, he pays very little attention to Christian Reconstruction because he correctly views it as "a tiny fringe of the Christian Right" (Wilcox 10996: 125). Nevertheless, he acknowledges that some Christian Right leaders, like Pat Robertson, have taken over some ideas from Rushdoony's writings. Unlike the apocalyptic scaremongers, however, he does not see this as necessarily bad because research presents "a more complex picture" that shows that while many Americans are supportive of things like "prayer in school" they reject the more extreme views of Reconstructionists (Ibid).

Finally, Wilcox notes a generational shift among evangelicals that moves younger ones towards more liberal social views and the centre of American society (Wilcox 1996:146). Consequently, while he admits that there is always the remote possibility of a Christian fascist takeover of America it seems highly unlikely because most Christians, including leaders of the Christian Right, are thoroughly democratic in their thinking and aspirations (Wilcox 1996:133-151). Therefore, he concludes that "Christian conservatives deserve a place in the political process" and that this involvement has "several positive aspects" because it will prevent the alienation from society of a large number of Americans (Wilcox 1996:150).

Some might wonder whether Wilcox work is too old to be of real value. Yet upon examination, this seems not to be the case. What the available data shows is that as a group evangelical Christians tend to be far less politically active than any other segment of society and that when they get involved politically their commitments are quite diverse. For example, Rodney Stark (2008:155) provides the following statistics for political activism:

		Make a campaign contribution		Work in a campaign		Attend a meeting
Evangelicals		27%		6%		15%
Liberal Protestants		32%		11%		21%
Roman Catholics		33%		11%		18%
No religion		37%		9%		25%
All non-Evangelicals		29%		10%		19%

Summarizing his survey of political attitudes Stark found no evidence that evangelical Christians played a disproportionate or extremist role in American political life (Stark 2008:157-158).

Another survey of the political and social attitudes of conservative evangelical Christians by the highly respected sociologists Andrew Greeley and Michael Hout reached similar conclusions. They wrote “In our experience most of those who stereotype the Conservative Christians do not know any of them.” Further, they suggest that attacks on evangelical Christians come from “not a few American secularists (who) think that any one with religious faith is mentally unbalanced …” (Greeley and Hout 2006:1983). The Pew Research project the *US Religious Landscape* reports similar findings (Pew Forums 2008).

Despite such evidence, it is still possible that right wing evangelical Christian fascists secretly exercise profound influence over decision making in both Washington and Ottawa. Perhaps as McDonald implies there a subtle influence that lurks below the surface of public events.

Fortunately, Michael Lindsay addresses this type of argument in his groundbreaking study *Faith in the Halls of Power* (2007). Although he acknowledges that “the evangelical movement … now wields power in just about every segment of American life …” (Lindsay 2007:208), he refutes the idea that there is some plot or “master plan” for Christian dominance by pointing out that the growth of evangelicals in American life simply reflects the demographics of American society (Lindsay 2007:218).

Further, he argues that “Evangelicals have been active in both parties …” (Lindsay 2007:208) and contrary to the view that evangelicals are intolerant clearly states “American evangelicalism has the ability to maintain a cores set of convictions without being so ridged that it cannot cooperate with others who do not share them” (Lindsay 2007:216). Most importantly Lindsay points out that “many of the (evangelical) leaders I spoke to tried to distance themselves from” the *Left Behind* series and similar books describing such works as “evangelical kitsch” (Lindsay 2007:219). As a result, he finds no evidence for the type of scare mongering the critics discussed in this paper promote.

Thus, while it is always possible that little green men from Mars run both the White House and 24 Sussex Dr, Ottawa, proving it is another matter. Of course, anyone who wants to maintain such an absurd belief can always claim that while on earth these

advanced aliens are invisible and rule politicians by telepathic means that are entirely undetectable. Against such arguments, reasonable people can only say “rubbish.”

The Enigma of Christian Zionism

The one exception to the argument that it is misleading to view evangelical Christians as part of a coordinated political lobby that has little influence in Washington appears to be what John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt (2006) describe as the “Israel Lobby.” This very open political lobby involves both Jewish and Christian leaders. Although Mearsheimer and Walt’s findings are hotly contested, at least as far as their claim that this lobby group exercises a powerful influence in Washington, their work draws attention to the existence of what an increasing number of people call “Christian Zionism” (Sizer 2004).

From the works of writers on this topic there seems no doubt that, Christian support was essential to the Zionist project. Indeed, Lewis suggests that Christians were more interested in Zionism than Jews were before the beginning of the twentieth century (Lewis 2009). Consequently, there exists today what Victoria Clark identifies as a Christian-Jewish alliance that gives considerable support to the State of Israel (Clark 2007). Even Jewish author Dan Cohn-Sherbok recognizes this and warns against what he sees as the danger it presents to both America and Israel in terms of unreasonable and intransigent political attitudes (Cohn-Sherbok 2006).

Further there is no doubt that pre-millennial beliefs help encourage Christian Zionist attitudes (Sizer 2004:66-80; 84-105; Cohn-Sherbok2006:151-160; Clark

2007:89-94;124-126;149-176). What is not clear is that it is pre-millennial beliefs that lead North Americans to identify with the Zionist project.

For example, while during former Prime Minister Harper's visited Israel in 2014 he repeatedly affirmed his governments support for the Jewish state. As a result, while the *Jerusalem Post* liked what he said it was careful to note that nevertheless in other situations he is very critical of Israel's policies. Therefore, it saw him as a clever politician not an apocalyptic fanatic (Bybelezer and Bybelezer 2014).

Whether or not Harper's statements resulted from firmly held religious beliefs or simply a perceived need to gain Jewish support for his party in Canada is an open question. Therefore, it seems that perhaps Mark Kennedy has it right when he suggests that the horror of Harper's recognition of the reality of the Holocaust is the real motive force behind his embrace of Israel rather than evangelical fanaticism (Kennedy 2014).[1]

The problem here is one of cause. There is no doubt that many American Christians give unswerving support to the State of Israel. Yet it is equally clear that many North Americans, like former Prime Minister Harper, support the State of Israel because they are horrified by the reality of the Holocaust and see a Jewish homeland as a just solution to an age old problem. The question therefore is do premillennial beliefs cause people to support the Zionist cause or simply reinforce existing predispositions? In other words, if pre-millennial beliefs did not exist would people continue to support Israel?

[1] Here the author must confess that he worked for Stephen Harper and his wife before he became the leader of the Conservative party. At that time, and afterwards, Mr. Harper was certainly not a religious fanatic strongly influenced by Christian fundamentalism.

Unfortunately, there appear to be no studies that ask this question. Instead, authors like McDonald and Hedges rush to judgment without considering other possibilities. Is it possible therefore, that what drives many Christians to support Israel is, as in the case of people like Mr. Harper, not simply end time beliefs, but rather guilt about the Holocaust and the refusal of countries like American and Canada to accept Jewish refugees in the 1930's?

Supporting this type of interpretation is the observation that paradoxically anti-Semitism is alive and well among many Christian Zionists (Goldberg 2006:13; 35; 72-74). Although in context her comments appear paranoid because many of the people, she criticizes are strongly pro-Israel, the history of Christian Zionism supports her case. The fact is, both Cohn-Sherbok and Victoria Clark point out that many twentieth century Christian Zionists, including some current leaders of the movement, saw the creation of the State of Israel as a way of ridding America and Europe of Jews (Cohn-Sherbok 2006:81-82; 144-145; Clark 2007:136-139; 228). Therefore, the reasons some people support the State of Israel may not be quite as straightforward as seems at first.

Given that these factors exist alongside millenarian beliefs about the restoration of Israel it is not at all clear that pre-millenarianism is the root cause of support for the State of Israel today. Consequently, all that can be said on this topic until further evidence is produced is that the casual relationship between apocalyptic beliefs and contemporary Middle Eastern politics, while probably a factor, is unproven and subject to qualification.

Conclusion

Anyone who wants to find evidence that millenarian beliefs have propelled Christians into politics can easily make such an assertion because this type of belief is widespread. Nevertheless, as shown, the argument that there is a causal link between certain theological ideas related to the end of the world and specific political policies remains unproven and in light of the evidence highly unlikely. Writers like McDonald and Hodges use half-understood theological beliefs about Armageddon to create the impression that evangelical Christians are fanatics whose participation in politics presents a threat to society.

Such arguments become very powerful propaganda when aimed at groups and people who someone wants to discredit. As with the case of Stockwell Day the charge of religious fanaticism is a useful propaganda tool that when made to stick can destroy a politicians career, at least in Canada, whether or not the c.

Perhaps the best way to end this paper is with observation made by Rodney Stark that “In the 1940’s and 1950’s, there were many popular books and articles in magazines … that exposed the secret plans for the Pope and his minions to take over America and stamp out all traces of democratic rule … Today these anti-Catholic concerns seem ridiculous. Hopefully the equally spurious claims about evangelical theocratic plots will also soon seem equally ridiculous” (Stark 2008:157-158).

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