

I am very thankful for the Christian friends we have," said Menachem Begin, Israeli prime minister from 1977 to 1983. "The friendship between Christians and the Jewish people is a new phenomenon of our time. It is indeed the beginning of the redemption of Israel."

Most Jews, though not as hyperbolic as Begin in their evaluation of Christian support for Israel, are nevertheless thankful. But what must be understood is that these Christians expect no peace for Jerusalem; instead, they are awaiting the soon destruction of millions of Jews in Palestine.

Futurism, the theology of Israel's staunchest Christian friends, teaches that

twentieth century, and with it has come untold sufferings of the people of Israel, climaxing in the terrible scourge of Hitler, who murdered some 6 million of the people of Israel. But, according to the prophets, the end is not yet and ahead of Israel is a terrible time of suffering before the day of restoration."<sup>5</sup>

## THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

A N D ♦ T H E ♦ D E S T R U C T I O N ♦ O F

# ISRAEL

anti-Semitism will reach a climactic frenzy worse than the Holocaust. "And in that period of time particularly," writes John Walvoord, a leading futurist scholar, "the whole world will be gripped by a hatred for the Jews which will be inspired by Satan himself."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Jack Van Impe writes of an era that is "going to be the greatest time of anti-Semitism in world history. In fact, it will be the devil's last attempt to liquidate, obliterate, and blot out the Jew."<sup>2</sup>

"As terrible as Jewish harassment has been in the past," warns author Hal Lindsey about the future, "anti-Semitism will reach its most feverish pitch."<sup>3</sup>

"The Crusades, which tried to recapture the holy places in Palestine from the Muslims, exterminated many Jews in Europe," writes futurist scholar Charles Ryrie. "Even the English and the French, as late as the thirteenth century, wiped out entire Jewish communities in their countries. And while Columbus was discovering America, Jews were being expelled from nearly all of western Europe. Hitler added to this awful record by exterminating more than 6 million Jews. But the worst bloodbath in Jewish history is yet to come."<sup>4</sup>

"The sad condition of being scattered to the ends of the earth," writes Walvoord about the Jews, "has persisted until the

BY CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN

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### Antichrist's Final Solution

The personage behind this slaughter of the Jews is the antichrist. Speculation abounds concerning his identity. In 1970 Hal Lindsey saw French newspaper editor Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber as a potential candidate. Everyone from Guru Maharishi and Sun Myung Moon to Henry Kissinger and Ronald Reagan has come under suspicion. Jimmy Swaggart thinks "he will probably be a Syrian Jew."

And as if one antichrist weren't enough, some have predicted that there will be two.

"The Bible indicated that there will actually be two antichrists. One will be a European who will rule the political and religious world from Rome. The other antichrist will be a Jew posing as a religious prophet."<sup>6</sup>

No matter who the antichrist is or how many there are, futurists agree on one thing: he wants to destroy the Jews.

"The antichrist is on the verge of realizing his great desire," writes Jimmy Swaggart, envisioning last day events, "the desire of all evil men, past and present—the final solution: total annihilation: every Jew dead."<sup>7</sup>

Most Jews at best want Israel living in peace with the Arabs; at worst, at least within safe, secure borders. Israelis gave

away more than half the country to try to secure peace. Yet for Begin's Christian friends, peace is not part of the prophetic picture, at least not until Jesus sets up His earthly kingdom.

"You and I know," says Jerry Falwell, who was given the coveted Jabotinsky award by Begin, "that there's not going to be any real peace in the Middle East until one day the Lord Jesus Christ sits on the throne of David in Jerusalem."<sup>8</sup>

Presidential aspirant Pat Robertson agrees: "There's not going to be any peace until God's peace, what we call the Peace of Jerusalem, which the Prince of Peace brings to the troubled region."<sup>9</sup>

Prior to the coming of the Prince of Peace, Israel is to face massive war. "The armies of all nations will be gathered in the area of Israel, especially around Jerusalem," writes Lindsey. "Think of it: at least 200 million soldiers from the Orient, with millions more from the forces of the West headed by the antichrist of the Revived Roman Empire."<sup>10</sup>

Walvoord writes of "the descent of the tremendous army of 200 million men upon the land of Israel to participate in the final world conflict."<sup>11</sup>

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Warns Jimmy Swaggart, "With his [the antichrist's] millions of men recruited from Russia and China, plus the Revived Roman Empire, he will come down to cover the nation of Israel like a cloud of locusts."<sup>12</sup>

"Jerusalem will see nothing but war," Lindsey writes in his book *There's a New World Coming*. "One Gentile army after another will invade the city of Jerusalem and march up and down its streets."

### Israel's Bloodbath and Conversion

The titles of futurist pamphlets, tracts, or chapters of Religious Right books about Israel include "A Bloodbath for Israel," "Why Russia Invades Israel," "World War III and Israel's Final Holocaust," "The Suffering of Israel," "Holocaust From the East," "Israel in the Tribulation," and "Russia Invades Israel—When?"

During these coming wars, Jews are going to be slaughtered en masse. "Heart-rending as it may be to contemplate, the people of Israel who are returning to their ancient land are placing themselves within the vortex of this future whirlwind which will destroy the majority of those living in Palestine."<sup>13</sup>

Hal Lindsey writes of "multiplied millions of soldiers slaughtering each other in and around Israel."<sup>14</sup>

How many Jews are expected to die?

"Some theologians," says D. H. Wilmington, of Liberty Baptist College, ". . . feel that on the basis of reading Zechariah 13 . . . two thirds of the Jews will be slaughtered."

"At this time," writes evangelist J. O. Grooms, "two thirds of the people in Israel will be killed."<sup>15</sup>

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says, "At that time two thirds of the Jewish nation will be struck down and perish."<sup>16</sup>

This coming carnage is supposed to take only a few years. "Only one third of the Jews will survive this brief three-and-one-half-year period," explains theologian Richard W. DeHaan in his *Israel and the Nations in Prophecy*.<sup>17</sup>

Says Swaggart, "Two thirds of Israel will die" during this tribulation period.

The *Liberty Bible Commentary*, says, "Two thirds of Israel's population will die as the result of the wrath vented against them by the antichrist."<sup>18</sup>

Based on Israel's present population of 4 million, 2.7 million Jews will be killed. Some fundamentalist theologians believe that the toll will be far higher. The figure, they say, will include not just Israelis, but all the world's Jews, perhaps gathered in Israel. Author Grace Halsell, in her book *Prophecy and Politics*, quotes a futurist on what he expects to be the fate of the Jews: "There are about 13.5 million Jews in the world today. So God is telling us that 9

million Jews will be killed in this battle—more than all the Jews killed by the Nazis."<sup>19</sup>

The Bible does speak of last-day catastrophes. The prophet Daniel (Daniel 12:1) warns of a "time of trouble, such as never was," and religious Jews have believed in a period of "Messianic woes" to precede the Messiah's advent. The book of Revelation also is filled with dire warnings of doom to precede the Messiah's return. The futurists place the Jews and Israel at the apex of these events, making the return of the Jews to Palestine a crucial factor for the Second Coming.

"The clearest sign of Christ's return is the modern state of Israel," says futurist Leon J. Wood.

"Before the Jews were a nation," says Hal Lindsey, "nothing was relevant."

"We must note the fact that in the entire universe," writes Wim Malgo, "all the stars, the sun, and the moon are subordinated by God to Israel's calling. That's how important Israel is in God's eye."<sup>20</sup>

And Israel is to be the center of Armageddon. "In the center of the stage is the little nation of Israel," writes Walvoord, "insignificant in number among the billions of the world's population and yet the fuse for the final world conflict which is ahead."<sup>21</sup>

Though the whole world is involved in this final conflict, the Jews, says Walvoord, are to have it the worst: "Though the judgments will obviously fall on all races and people, it seems that Israel is to be the special object of satanic hatred."<sup>22</sup>

This unparalleled persecution of the Jews, however, is not without a good cause. "The great tribulation," writes Richard DeHaan, "will be the means of Israel's conversion, and this will precede the glorious second coming of the Lord Jesus to the earth."<sup>23</sup>

Most futurists agree that this mass destruction of the Jews will cause the survivors, believed to number only 144,000, to accept Jesus. "The final persecution of the Jews," explains Walvoord, "will awaken Israel's understanding to what has taken place. . . . This clear fulfillment of prophecy will lead to the startling realization that the first coming of the Messiah is past and His second coming is near. In the horror of the last three and a half years of great tribulation, these new believers will cling to the hope of Christ's second coming."<sup>24</sup>

"Israel's future will climax," says Swaggart, "with Jesus Christ being accepted as their Messiah, and with them spreading his gospel throughout the world."

"The final reason for the Tribulation," explains Falwell, "will be to purge Israel. As gold is purified through the heat of the fire, so the nation of Israel will come

through the Tribulation fit for the Master's use."<sup>25</sup>

"There will be," said Lindsey, "144,000 Jewish Billy Grahams turned loose at once!"

### Eschatological Expectations

Most Jews seem ignorant of the Religious Right's scenario for their future. Gerald S. Strober, a New York Jewish leader with close ties to Falwell, says: "Jerry Falwell's support for Israel is the most significant manifestation yet of evangelical concern for Israel's security in that it brings together *positive theological elements* and considerable political muscle" (italics supplied).

One wonders what positive theological elements Strober was thinking of: the new wave of anti-Semitism, the Russian invasion of Israel, the mass destruction of the Jews, or perhaps the accepting of Jesus by the survivors?

Nathan Perlmutter, of the Anti-Defamation League, once wrote: "For ourselves, however, no matter Pat Robertson's, Bailey Smith's, Jerry Falwell's friendship for Israel is rooted in the New Testament; we've an open mind. If the Messiah comes, on that very day we'll consider our options. Meanwhile, let's praise the Lord and pass the ammunition."<sup>26</sup>

Perlmutter is missing the point. During the Holocaust, many "Christians" didn't help Jews because the Christians believed that the Holocaust was the Jews' punishment for rejecting Jesus. They expected the Jews to be persecuted and killed. Their theology encouraged them to do nothing.

Today, millions of Christians follow another similarly distorted eschatology, one that teaches, expects, and predicts mass destruction of the Jews. Should persecution come, how much support should the Jews expect from those whose greatest hope—the second coming of Jesus—is predicated upon another Holocaust?

Jimmy Swaggart envisions the scenario: "The antichrist will amass his armies . . . The hated Jews' will be now put to death. . . . he can take out his venom and hatred upon those who brought the Messiah into this world—the Jews . . . It will be a time of such horror that it beggars description."

"The antichrist will fling his armies against all Israel, but especially against Jerusalem. It will be door-to-door fighting, house-to-house confrontation, and the city will be leveled. The Jews will have their backs to the wall. The Bible says that half the city will fall. It speaks of women being ravished and raped. . . . This is what Adolf Eichmann, Adolf Hitler, and Himmler could not bring to pass."<sup>27</sup>

Jerry Falwell agrees. "Millions of devout Jews will again be slaughtered."

"When you have true love for a people,"

says J comes recipr "I; wheth Wit PLO? For other must "rede Pro mind.

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says Jimmy Swaggart of the Jews, "then it comes as a real shock when they don't reciprocate."

"I am going to be their [the Jews] friend whether they want me or not."<sup>28</sup>

With friends like these, who needs the PLO?

For Swaggart, Falwell, and millions of other "friends," rivers of Jewish blood must again flow. Then will Israel be "redeemed."

Probably not what Begin had in mind.



#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> John Walvoord, *The Return of the Lord* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1955), p. 124.

<sup>2</sup> Jack Van Impe, *America, Israel, Russia* (Jack Van Impe Ministries, 1984), p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Hal Lindsey, *There's a New World Coming* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984), p. 156.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Ryrie, *The Living End* (Old Tappan,

N. J.: Fleming Revell Co., 1973), p. 78.

<sup>5</sup> John Walvoord, *Israel in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), p. 107.

<sup>6</sup> Lindsey, p. 87.

<sup>7</sup> Jimmy Swaggart, *The Battle of Armageddon* (Baton Rouge: Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, 1982), p. 26.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Dinesh D. Souza, "Is This the Year the World Ends?" *Washington Post*, Jan. 4, 1987.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Lindsey, p. 194.

<sup>11</sup> John Walvoord, *The Nations in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1967), p. 141.

<sup>12</sup> Swaggart, p. 24.

<sup>13</sup> Walvoord, *Israel in Prophecy*, p. 113.

<sup>14</sup> Lindsey, p. 215.

<sup>15</sup> J. O. Grooms, *Russia Invades Israel—When?* (Lynchburg, Va.: 1983).

<sup>16</sup> J. Walvoord and R. Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Brooks, 1985), p. 1569.

<sup>17</sup> Richard W. DeHaan, *Israel and the Nations in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1968), p. 84.

<sup>18</sup> Jerry Falwell, ex. ed., *Liberty Bible Commentary* (New York: Thomas Nelson Publisher, 1983), p. 2689.

<sup>19</sup> Grace Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics* (Westport, Conn.: Lawrence Hill and Co., 1986), p. 26.

<sup>20</sup> Wim Malgo, "News From Israel" (West Columbia, S.C.: Midnight Call Ministry, 1986), p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> John F. Walvoord and John E. Walvoord, *Armageddon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1974), p. 23.

<sup>22</sup> Walvoord, *Israel in Prophecy*, p. 111.

<sup>23</sup> DeHaan.

<sup>24</sup> Walvoord and Walvoord, *Armageddon*, p. 118.

<sup>25</sup> Jerry Falwell, "Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus" (Lynchburg, Va.: Old-Time Gospel Hour, 1983), p. 14.

<sup>26</sup> Nathan Perlmutter, *The Real Anti-Semitism in America* (New York: Arbor House Pub. Co., 1982), p. 172.

<sup>27</sup> Swaggart, pp. 23-27.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in "Falwell Attempts to Mend Interfaith Fences," *Washington Post*, Apr. 4, 1985.

## FUTURISM'S PAST

Futurism, the belief that the Jews and Israel are at the center of Armageddon, is the dominant theology of evangelical Christianity. And though futurists like to place their roots in the Hebrew prophets and apostles, the origin is really in the Counter-Reformation.

"You must be armed with Scripture," Martin Luther wrote, "so that you can not only call the pope the antichrist but also know how to prove it so clearly that you could die with this conviction and stand against the devil in death."

Reformation leaders such as John Calvin, Philipp Melancthon, Heinrich Bullinger, Nicholas Ridley, and others, agreed.

"The Reformers in all lands had been unanimous," wrote historian LeRoy Edwin Froom, "in applying most of the prophecies of antichrist to the papacy. . . . In fact, it was this united Protestant stand on the papacy that became the spring of their reformatory action. It was this clear understanding of the prophetic symbols that led them to protest against Rome with such extraordinary courage and effectiveness. . . . These positions were, moreover, shared by hundreds of thousands, and were adopted by both rulers and people. Under their influence, whole nations abjured allegiance to the bishop of Rome. It was clearly a crisis of major proportions."

Jesuit scholarship came to Rome's rescue. In 1590 a Spanish Jesuit named Francisco Ribera published a 500-page commentary on the Apocalypse. Instead of the antichrist being the papacy, Ribera

claimed that antichrist would be an individual who would appear in the last days and bring a three-and-a-half-year period of tribulation that would center on the Jews and Palestine.

"The futurist school, founded by the Jesuit Ribera," wrote Catholic writer G. S. Hitchcock, "looks for antichrist . . . at the end of the Christian dispensation."

For three centuries Ribera's theology—amended, polished, and expanded by other Catholics—was the genuinely "Catholic" system of prophetic interpretation. It made no headway with Protestants—who refuted it in numerous publications—until the nineteenth century, when it finally penetrated Protestantism, especially in England, where it was incorporated into a more complex theology called dispensationalism. Today millions of evangelical Christians, including Oral Roberts, Billy Graham, and Pat Robertson, accept some form of Ribera's Counter-Reformation theology, whether or not they realize its origin.

Yet not all Protestants of various denominations accept futurism.

"The futurist uses the Bible as a crystal ball to make sensational prognostications about the future," says theologian and author Samuele Bacchiocchi. "But their predictions are based on literal interpretations of texts that don't warrant such a literal rendition. All one has to do is look at some of their predictions, especially Hal Lindsey's, to see how wrong many of them have been."

As Bacchiocchi, professor of religion at

the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan, explains, to reject the belief that the return of the Jews to Palestine is a fulfillment of chapters in (for example) Ezekiel or Zechariah, doesn't necessarily mean to reject Israel.

"It is quite possible to believe personally," says Bacchiocchi, "that the Jewish people have a moral or historical right to the land of Palestine and that God has providentially led in the establishment of Israel. But that does not necessarily mean it is a fulfillment of Bible prophecy."

The Hebrew Scripture is filled with hundreds, if not thousands, of texts dealing with ancient Israel and what could have been had Israel remained faithful to the covenant God set before them. Instead, for various reasons (the Talmud says because the children did not attend school but loitered in the streets), Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed. Today, futurists believe that these prophecies ultimately will be fulfilled by modern Israel, even though Israel is a secular country that has no agreement with God to abide by any covenant conditions.

Despite its suspect beginnings and theology, futurism reigns over much of evangelical Protestantism. Most futurists—with their maps of impending Middle East wars in one hand, and their Hal Lindsey books in the other—see themselves on the cutting edge of last-day events. In reality they are following the nonbiblical vision of a Jesuit who died almost four centuries ago.—C.G.