

Playing Victim for Politics and Profit -- Murdoch, Palin and the Extreme Right

by Frank Schaeffer via teale - Brad Blog *Thursday, Jan 14 2010, 11:44pm*

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The following article is not only highly readable and entertaining it is USEFUL for a number of reasons, not least of which is the APPLIED Balkanisation of the USA!



Sarah Palin, millennialist

Exploiting widening divisions, fissures and inequities in US society -- note, I do not refer to the theological sphere alone -- is a relatively easy matter today!

We trust all our US Hubs and comrades review essential strategies and concentrate on further widening social and economic divides, not by opposition BUT by compliant support and ACCELERATION of existing extremist views -- social implosion is therefore guaranteed.

We announce this in full view of all (and there are many) US 'intelligence' agencies, as clearly, their skill levels match their collective IQ -- you INEPT, dumbarse fucks!

We do like a little jibe every now and then, please forgive us. However, the real reason is the agencies are powerless to stop what they and their Corporatist masters have created (a Frankenstein nation) which we are merely helping on its way to oblivion or "Rapture," whatever the case may be.

More guns, more bonuses to the wealthy, more right wing extreme ideology and more paralysis to the left, will see America thoroughly Balkanised -- and you didn't think the strategy could be applied to America -- it goes begging! Ed.

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Do you want to understand Sarah Palin's attraction to the born-again Republican/Fox crowd? Then you have to "get" the apocalyptic fantasy world they live in. I know. It's

where I once lived.

Palin comes from that world of hysterical paranoid delusion. It's her attraction to the people who like her. God has "raised her up for such a time as this" they believe. It is why Fox "News" just hired her as another one of their fair and balanced commentators.

Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye's Left Behind series of sixteen novels (so far!) represents everything that is most deranged about Palin's religion, and understanding why those books are popular is the key to "getting" the Palin Fox "News" deal...

The Left Behind novels represent the fundamentalist end times view that Palin buys into. They have sold tens of millions of copies while spawning an "End Times" cult, or rather egging it on. Such products as Left Behind wall paper, screen savers, children's books, and video games have become part of the ubiquitous American background noise.

Less innocuous symptoms include people stocking up on assault rifles and ammunition, adopting "Christ-centered" home school curricula, fearing higher education, embracing rumor as fact, and learning to love hatred for the "other," as exemplified by a revived anti-immigrant racism, the murder of doctors who perform legal abortions, and even a killing in the Holocaust Museum.

No, I am not blaming Palin, Jenkins and LaHaye's product line for murder or racism or any other evil intent or result. What I am saying is that feeding the paranoid delusions of people on the fringe of the fringe --- people who think they alone are "Real Americans" --- contributes to a dangerous climate that may provoke violence in a few individuals.

Convincing folks that Armageddon is on the way, and all we can do is wait, pray, and protect our families from the chaos that will be the "prelude" to the "Return of Christ," is perhaps not the best recipe for political, economic, or personal stability, let alone social cohesion! It may also not be the best philosophy on which to make serious American foreign policy decisions --- especially for a Palin-type who we now know didn't even know why North and South Korea were divided into two!

Palin might not know the 2 Koreas but she knows when Jesus is returning!

Here's the official position of Sarah Palin's denomination, of which she'd been a member for 25 years until she left when political ambition meant clearing the decks of embarrassment (then, on the advice of her political McCain handlers, even further distancing herself). Palin was born into a Roman Catholic family. She was "born-again" and joined the Wasilla Assembly of God, a Pentecostal church, which she attended until 2002. Palin then switched to the Wasilla Bible Church --- equally if not even more nutty -- - because, she said, she preferred their children's ministries. When in Juneau, she attends the Juneau Christian Center. After the Republican National Convention, a spokesperson for the McCain campaign told CNN that Palin "doesn't consider herself Pentecostal" and has "deep religious convictions on the 'End Times.'":

What do the Assemblies of God believe concerning end-time events?

The Assemblies of God understands the biblical description of end-time events to be literal, not symbolic (as do some churches).

...

To the Christian who truly loves Jesus, the sudden appearance of Christ in the air will hold no fear, dread, or disappointment.

...

The end times will be full of frightening events. Christians will be spared from suffering some of them by being snatched away in the Rapture.

...

With the saints removed from the earth, a time of suffering will come upon the whole world.

...

The Tribulation directly concerns Israel and is God's judgment for long apostasy (abandonment of religious faith) and neglect of the Messiah - Jesus Christ

...

After the judgment fire physically destroys those deceived by Satan at the end of the Millennium, all the wicked who have ever lived on the face of the earth will be dead. Then will follow the resurrection of the wicked dead to stand before the austere Judge "from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away" (Revelation 20:11)

...

If it were only the scoffers and skeptics who raise question about the certainty of the Lord's return for His own (cf. 2 Peter 3:3,4), it would be bad enough. But for the Church of Jesus Christ to become lethargic and careless because the long-promised chain of end-time events has not yet begun is unconscionable. The Assemblies of God preaches a clear message that Jesus is coming soon...

The momentum toward what amounts to a broad Palin-loving subculture seceding from the union (in order to await "The End") and/or a time when the US government quits taxing us, is irrevocably prying loose a chunk of the American population from both sanity and their fellow citizens. If you think Palin's fans are nuts; they are. If you think the tea baggers are odd; they are. The theology of the "End" is behind both. In the religious version Jesus is on the way. In the "tea bagger" secular version: the US government is the enemy and is the harbinger of doom, collapse and the end.

Disclosure: I was one of those nuts

A time-out for disclosure is in order. I knew Jerry Jenkins quite well many years ago when I was a Religious Right leader before I quit in the mid 1980s. We worked on a project together. I also knew Tim LaHaye. I'm betting that they mean well. It seems to me that they also have no idea what they have helped unleash. You can be very decent and very blind.

That said...the evangelical/fundamentalists --- and hence, from the early 1980s until the election of President Obama in 2008, the Religious Right as it informed U.S. policy through the then-dominant Republican Party --- are in the grip of an apocalyptic Rapture cult centered on revenge and vindication. This End Times death wish is built on a literalist interpretation of the Book of Revelation. Too bad.

The Bible's weirdest book (and that's saying something!)

Revelation: this weird book, was the last to be included in the New Testament. It was included as canonical only relatively late in the process after a heated dispute. The historic Churches East and West remain so suspicious of Revelation that to this day it has never been included as part of the cyclical public readings of scripture in Orthodox

services. The book of Revelation is read in Roman and Anglican Churches only during Advent.

Given that Revelation is now being hyped as the literal --- even desired --- roadmap to Armageddon and given Palin and her long-time church buys into this vision, it's worth pausing to note that the book is nothing more than a bizarre pastoral letter that was addressed to seven specific churches in Asia at the end of the first century by someone (maybe John or maybe not) who appears to have been far from well when he wrote it. In any case, the letter was not intended for use outside of its liturgical context, not to mention that it reads like Jesus on acid.

Profit-taking from scraps of "prophecy"

As I describe in detail in my new book *Patience with God: Faith for People Who Don't Like Religion (or Atheism)*, the Left Behind series is really just recycled evangelical/fundamentalist profit-taking from scraps of "prophecy" left over from an earlier commercial effort to mine the vein of fearsome End Times gold. A book called *The Late Great Planet Earth* was the 1970s incarnation of this nonsense.

It was written by Hal Lindsey, a "writer" who dropped by my evangelical-leader parents' ministry of L'Abri several times. When Mikhail Gorbachev became president of the U.S.S.R., Planet Earth groupies claimed Gorbachev was the Antichrist, citing the references in Revelation to the "mark of the beast" as proof because Gorbachev had a birthmark on his forehead!

After everything predicted in the book came to nothing, Lindsey rewrote and "updated" his "interpretations" in many sequels, in what must have been some sort of record for practicing George Orwell's idea of "doublethink" via editorial revision of ever-changing "facts."

To Jenkins and LaHaye, who have taken over the Hal Lindsey franchise of apocalypse-for-fun-and-profit and expanded it into a massive industry, the "chosen" will soon be airlifted to safety. The focus on the "signs" leading up to this hoped-for aeronautical excursion is understandably no longer the defunct U.S.S.R. but the ripped-from-the-headlines gift that keeps on giving: the Middle East.

The key to understanding the popularity of this series and just why a nonentity like Palin is accepted as a leader by her fans --- and now Fox, and the whole host of other End Times "ministries" from the ever weirder Jack-the-Rapture-is-coming!-Van-Impe to the smoother but no less bizarre pages of Christianity Today magazine --- isn't some new or sudden interest in prophecy, but the deepening inferiority complex suffered by the evangelical/fundamentalist community.

The Evangelical inferiority complex

The words "left behind" are ironically what the books are about, but not in the way their authors intended. The evangelical/fundamentalists, from their crudest egocentric celebrities to their "intellectuals" touring college campuses trying to make evangelicalism respectable, have been left behind by modernity. They won't change their literalistic anti-science, anti-education, anti-everything superstitions, so now they nurse a deep grievance against "the world." This has led to a profound fear of the "other."

Jenkins and LaHaye provide the ultimate revenge fantasy for the culturally left behind Palin/Fox crowd against the "elite." The Left Behind franchise holds out hope for the self-disenfranchised that at last soon everyone will know "we" were right and "they" were wrong. They'll know because Spaceship Jesus will come back and whisk us away, leaving everyone else to ponder just how very lost they are because they refused to say the words, "I accept Jesus as my personal savior" and join our side while there was still time! Even better: Jesus will kill all those smart-ass Democrat-voting, over-educated fags who have been mocking us!

The bestselling status of the Left Behind novels proves that, not unlike Islamist terrorists who behead their enemies, many evangelical/fundamentalist readers relish the prospect of God doing lots of messy killing for them as they watch in comfort from on high. They want revenge on all people not like them --- forever.

Jenkins, LaHaye --- and now Palin --- cash in on years of imagined victimhood

I say imagined, because the born-again had one of their very own, George W. Bush, in the White House for eight long, ruinous years and also dominated American politics for the better part of thirty years before that. Nevertheless, their sense of being a victimized minority is still very real --- and very marketable. Whether they were winning politically or not, they nurtured a mythology of persecution by the "other." Evangelical/fundamentalists believed that even though they were winning, somehow they had actually lost.

Most of that sense of lost battles is related to the so-called "Culture Wars" issues in which evangelical/fundamentalists did not fare so well, from the legalization of abortion to gay rights. But rather than admitting that they were often losing the arguments, or had come across as so mean (or plain dumb) that few outsiders wanted to be like them, they blamed everyone else, from the courts to organizations such as Planned Parenthood, the ACLU, the New York Times, and the "left-wing media."

Just about any scapegoat would do to deny or disguise the simple fact that fewer Americans wanted to follow the evangelical/fundamentalist Church Ladies into their gloomy cave (and/or the never-never land of the Rapture) and park their brains there.

Mea Culpa

I used to be part of the self-pitying, whining, evangelical/fundamentalist chorus. I remember going on the Today Show with host Jane Pauley back in the late 1970s (or early 1980s). I debated with the head of the American Library Association about my claim that our evangelical/fundamentalist books weren't getting a fair shake from the "cultural elites." We Schaeffers were selling millions of books, but the New York Times never reviewed them. I made the point that we were being ignored by the "media elite," which was somewhat ironic, given that I had been invited to appear on Today to make that claim.

I dropped out of the evangelical/fundamentalist subculture soon after that Today appearance (years later I was back on Today in my secular writer incarnation, being interviewed about a book of mine on the military/civilian divide, but I decided not to mention that I'd been on the show about thirty years before in what seemed like either another lifetime or an out-of-body experience).

Fox/Palin and the victimhood mythology

Others like Fox and Palin carried on where I and many others in the first wave of the anti-abortion/religious Right wave left off, pushing the victimhood mythology to the next generation of evangelical/fundamentalists, and they have cultivated a following among the terminally aggrieved based on ceaselessly warning them about "the world."

A host of evangelical/fundamentalist Cassandras tour college campuses reinforcing their followers' perennial chip-on-the-shoulder attitude by telling fearful evangelical/fundamentalist students to hold fast against the secular onslaught. They tell their student listeners (and those students' even more worried parents) to not let "those people" --- professors, members of the Democratic Party, moderates, progressives, and such ordinary American men and women as Jews, gays, and members of the educated "elite" --- strip them of their faith. Hundreds of books by many evangelical/fundamentalist authors could be consolidated into one called '*How to Get Through College with Your Fundamentalist Faith Intact So You Won't Wind Up Becoming One of Them.*'

Sometimes right-wing paranoia takes an ugly twist. A website maintained by James Von Brunn, an avowed racist and anti-Semite well known to the netherworld of white supremacy --- and the assassin who killed a security guard at the Holocaust Museum in June of 2009 --- said that Von Brunn tried to carry out a "citizen's arrest" in 1981 on the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, whom he accused of "treason." When he was arrested outside the room where the board was meeting, he was carrying a sawed-off shotgun, a revolver, and a knife. Police said he planned to take members of the Fed hostage.

"Mainstream" (in other words, slightly less nutty and less violent) religious-Right Republicans have been saying the same thing as Von Brunn about the Fed for years, particularly the so-called "dominionists" who believe it's their job to reestablish God's dominion on earth. They preach Old Testament-style vengeance and loony gold-standard "economics" from many "respectable" pulpits. They also hate America (as it is), want a revolution in the name of God, and espouse "pro-life" beliefs, anti-gay hate, racism, and far-Right Republican politics. They take the Republican anti-government propaganda to the next step and say that even paying taxes is "unconstitutional." I know them well.

"Reconstructionism" and Palin

I knew the founders of the dominionist movement --- people like the late Reverend Rousas John Rushdoony, the father of "Christian Reconstructionism" and the modern evangelical/fundamentalist home school movement.

What most Americans don't know is that someone like Palin --- who says God is "leading her" --- believe that what God wants them to do is implement the reconstructionist agenda.

Rushdoony (whom I met and talked with several times) believed that interracial marriage, which he referred to as "unequal yoking," should be made illegal. He also opposed "enforced integration," referred to Southern slavery as "benevolent," and said that "some people are by nature slaves." Rushdoony was also a Holocaust denier.

And yet his home school materials are a mainstay of the right-wing evangelical home school movement to this day. In Rushdoony's 1973 book, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, he says that fundamentalist Christians must "take control of governments and impose strict biblical law" on America and then the world. That would mean the death penalty for "practicing homosexuals." We see his agenda in the American groups like the Family connected to recent legislation in Uganda to give the death penalty to gays.

Many evangelical leaders --- including Palin --- deny holding Reconstructionist beliefs, but Beverly and Tim LaHaye (of Concerned Women for America and the co-author of the novels we're talking about here), Donald Wildmon (of the American Family Association), and the late D. James Kennedy (of Coral Ridge Ministries and a friend of mine before I left the movement) served alongside Rushdoony on the secretive Coalition for Revival, a group formed in 1981 to "reclaim America for Christ." I went to some of the early meetings.

Many evangelical/fundamentalist's can't get enough of the "end times" rush. And they are Palin's bedrock. They've been sucking doom up up since the early 1970s, and now, in the Left Behind books and Palin's rise, the message has gone viral.

Conclusion

The expanding Left Behind entertainment empire also feeds the dangerous delusions of Christian Zionists, who are convinced that the world is heading to a final Battle of Armageddon and who see this as a good thing! Christian Zionists, led by many "respectable" mega-pastors --- including John McCain supporter, Reverend John Hagee -- believe that war in the Middle East is God's will.

In his book *Jerusalem Countdown: A Warning to the World*, Hagee maintains that Russia and the Arabs will invade Israel and then will be destroyed by God. This will cause the Antichrist --- now, apparently, on re-assignment as the head of the European Union --- to stir up a confrontation over Israel between China and the West.

Perhaps, in the era of Obama, Hagee will do a fast rewrite and say that President Obama is the Antichrist, because the same folks who are into Christian Zionism are also into the far, far loony right of the Republican Party represented by mainstreamed oddities like Sarah Palin. These are the same people who insist that President Obama is a "secret Muslim," "not an American," and/or "a communist," "more European than American," or whichever one of those contradictory things is worse--not like us anyway, that's for sure.

Palin buys into the Christian Zionist agenda hook, line, and sinker. She's all for unbridled US military action. She's for this because theologically speaking the more war the better, at least in the Middle East. Jesus needs war to fulfill "prophecy" so he can "come back"!

Palin's unreconstructed theology is the real story here. And I don't know of one media outlet that has connected these dots in the mainstream.

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