

Media in Texas, Biblical Prophecy and the Middle East

(The extent to which messianic and apocalyptic messages regarding Middle East conflict appeared in the media available to Texans during March, 2003)

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### **Introduction**

In March 2003 the United States and several of its allies invaded Iraq. There was extensive media coverage complete with hours of media commentary on the possible outcomes and meanings of the war. Iraq claimed the invasion was an attack on all of Islam and called for a holy war to defend the faith (CNN, April 1, 2003 12:15 PM). At the same time American Evangelical minister and media mogul Pat Robertson was declaring that Islam was conducting a war on Christians (CBN, March, 27, 2003 2:00 PM). Christian Evangelical media leaders purport to represent a sizable number of members of the American public. In fact, one organization, the National Association of Evangelicals claims to represent a constituency of more than 27-million ([http://images.mychurchesimages.com/4469/pdf/HAGGARD%20appointment %20 PDF.pdf](http://images.mychurchesimages.com/4469/pdf/HAGGARD%20appointment%20PDF.pdf)). Reverend Jerry Falwell claims there are 70 million (Simon, 2002, p.1). Other estimates are 46 per cent of the U.S. population (Balmer, 2003, p. 7).

Evangelicals have been outspoken in their support for Israel and frequently suggest a deep religious and prophetic Biblical meaning to conflict in the Middle East (Strickert, 2002, p. 2). For some the idea of mass destruction by fire and brimstone spoken of in the Bible has taken on an adaptation to the present age. Televangelists confidently predict nuclear war, economic collapse and environmental destruction (Lamy, 1992, p. 3.) So marked is the belief in the reality of Armageddon that tourists go to the Jezreel Valley in Israel, believed to be the future site of Armageddon battles, to view a multi-media presentation on its history and stand where the future events will occur (Silberman, p. 2.) This research examines a contrast between general media reporting concerning Middle East conflict and what a sizable group of Americans, informed by an impressive array of Evangelical Christian media outlets, may see as

the meaning behind the events.

### **Rationale for Research**

Research reveals there is some level of influence of Evangelical Christianity on American policy makers (Diamond, 1993, pp. 2-3). A survey conducted by James Davison Hunter found that Evangelical leadership expressed a commitment to perform public and political roles and that they did so “with a willingness to violate dominant cultural ... norms concerning the role of religion in the public sphere” (Hunter, 1984, p. 368-369). The rationale for this writing is to examine whether Evangelical broadcasters, who may exert a significant political influence, are distributing to a portion of the population a perception of Middle East conflict which assigns an apocalyptic meaning to unfolding events in the Middle East and assumes divine predestination of American involvement in those events. These messages may be either conveyed specifically, or understood by the Evangelical media consumer as simply a matter of assumed Evangelical, community doctrinal belief reflected in comments using certain Biblical-style or fundamentalist phraseology (Fineman, 2003, p. 28.).

The rationale for examining such views on the Middle East conflict is additionally important when one considers that President George Bush is seen by Evangelicals to be one of their own; one who may share their doctrinal views concerning the conflict and Bush’s Biblical role in it (Balmer, 2003, p.7). It appears important that a Mass Communication case study examine whether the mainstream media, while reporting fundamentalist religious forces are at work on the Arab side of the conflict, may be missing deeply held perceptions of eternal and apocalyptic Christian significance of the events which may be feeding American attitudes of being on “God’s side” in the Middle East. The treatment of Middle East events by media ,

secular and Evangelical Christian, will be examined in light of Social Responsibility theory (Hutchins Commission, 1942) and Cultivation theory for Mass Communication (Baran and Davis, 1995, p. 372). The study does not attempt to undertake an examination of the extent, or measured level of, influence on attitudes of the public or policy makers. It is an examination of the messages which may be shaping those attitudes and which, given their points of origination and wide dissemination, appear to be embraced by a significant number of influential Evangelical Christian leaders who may have some level of influence on public policy.

### **Review of Literature**

Studies of Evangelical Christian influence on media coverage of the Middle East conflict are few. The much more specific focus on the extent to which Texans may be exposed to Evangelical Messianic and apocalyptic messages in reporting on the Middle East conflict does not appear to have been previously addressed in a study. Context for a study of such messages can, however, be found in a number of previously published articles.

Writing in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, author Anson Shupe reviews the book *Prophecy and Politics: Militant Evangelicals on the Road to Nuclear War*. Here is found a reference to the "...Armageddon mentality of evangelical fundamentalist Christians in which Israel is merely an expendable means to a dispensationalist, eschatological end." The reference says further that Israelis are in Christian millennialist thinking, "...the canon fodder during the Tribulation and at the battle of Armageddon" (Shupe, 1987, p. 416). Further context for a public perception that a great final battle in the Middle East is present in Evangelical Biblical concept comes from "*Armageddon, Megido and the End of the World* by Neil Asher Silberman in the journal *Archaeology* (Silberman, 1999, pp. 36-37), and from Armageddon in

Politics by John M. Swomley writing in *The Humanist* (Swomley, 1999, p. 8-9). A further description of a popular “apocalypticism of a classical millennial myth” related to war in the Middle East is afforded by Phillip Lamy in the study: *Millennialism in the Mass Media: The Case of Soldier of Fortune Magazine*” (Lamy, 1992, pp. 408-415).

Several studies examined the extent and nature of Evangelical Christian support for Israel and demonstrate ways in which an apocalyptic or Messianic message may impact public policy regarding the Middle East. For example, *The Christian Right and Support for Israel* by Fred Strickert examines the questions of why and how “...the Christian Right has for decades offered one-sided support for Isreal.” Strickert quotes Southern Baptist Convention President Jerry Vines as describing the Prophet Mohammed as a “demon possessed pedophile” (Strickert, 2002, pp. 80-81). The work examines the context in which Israel gave a Lear jet to Evangelical media figure Jerry Falwell, and provides further insight on the “Christian Fundamentalists apocalyptic Armageddon version of the end times” (Strickert, 2002, pp. 80-81).

In *Religion and Political Civility: The Coming Generation of American Evangelicals*, author James Davison Hunter asserts that “Evangelical elites are even more strongly oriented than their laity toward the legitimacy of religious organizations performing a public/political role. Hunter says Evangelicals, at least by what they say, do violate dominant cultural (though not legal) norms concerning the role of religion in the public sphere” (Hunter, 1984, pp. 368-369). It is a message which is echoed by Sara Diamond in her writing: *Hard Times for the Christian Right* in which she asserts the “Christian Right has offered the Republican Party a pre-organized block of loyalists who will vote, stuff envelopes and walk precincts in exchange for the party’s maintenance of an uncompromising stand on pivotal issues” (Diamond, 1993, pp.34-

36). Diamond also provides some specifics on the extent to which these issues can be promoted through the extensive media influence of Evangelical Christians.

Scholarly literature provides further context for examining some of the potential players in a media coverage scenario. As an example one could point to the appearance, on Sunday March 2, 2003, of Richard Land, Chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission on a nationally televised *CSPAN* program. His purpose was to debate in favor of the morality of a war with Iraq. Land's comments should be viewed in the context of his own history of recent appearances in the media and those by others officially representing his denomination. This is context which has been provided by writers Strickert, Hoover and others (Strickert, 2002, pp.80-81; Hoover 2002, pp. 79-85; Stacy 1982, pp. 291-304).

Additionally *Superceding the Jews* by Andrew Walsh suggests that even cartoonist Johnny Hart's popular cartoon series "B.C." might carry a Christian/Jewish eschatological message. Walsh, in writing about a controversial "B.C." cartoon in which Messianic Christianity was depicted as superceding Judaism, describes Hart as an "ardent and conservative Evangelical Christian" (Walsh, 2001, pp. 68-76). The article can serve as a reference for an examination of even comic strips for Messianic/Armageddon type messages.

Evangelical messages are also distributed extensively through music CD's and videos. In *Mainstreaming of Christian Music Videos*, Joe Gow details how this market has reached more than a half billion dollars in sales and writes that this music is widely distributed in the U.S. Gow reports Evangelical Christian messages are distributed via music in secular retail outlets including WalMart, K-Mart and the Columbia Record Club. Gow cites evidence that God,

Jesus and Salvation make up a part of the media message which is expected to be delivered by the end of the century to ten to thirteen percent of the American population via CD and video music distribution (Gow, 1998, pp. 183-189) It is certainly worth examining whether these music numbers carry messages which may influence American thinking on the nature of the Middle East conflict.

In his study *Al Quasa, Intifada and the U.S. Media*, writer Seth Ackerman provides some baseline information regarding a consistency with which the U.S. national media has been pro-Israel in their reporting (Ackerman, 2001, pp. 61-75).

The use of the studies listed here can provide reference for recognition of potential Evangelical influence in messages of an apocalyptic nature which may appear in media references to the Middle East conflict.

### **Methodology**

(1) A search of scholarly research was conducted to examine the extent to which the subject under study, or topics closely related to the study subject, had been examined previously. These scholarly resources were used to provide understanding of, and context for, the Evangelical view on the Middle East and end time scenarios. They were also referenced for background to provide subject matter context for comments by political and evangelical leaders who might appear in the media to engage in discussions concerning the Middle East conflict.

(2) Mainstream television and newspaper media were examined for messages which qualified for inclusion in the study subject. Qualification included reference to: "Good and evil" related to the Middle East conflict, apocalyptic or messianic messages, references to doing "God's work" regarding the Middle East, Christian support for Israel, and religious

context for the war in Iraq. When these messages were not included, it was assumed the programming assigned no overt mention of eschatological Christian meaning to events in the Middle East. For mainstream television, this was done through a daily monitoring of Austin, Texas local television news stations KVUE and KXAN. Additionally, utilizing a system in Austin, Texas and implementing the “Search” function of the Dish Satellite Network, programming was found using keywords: Religion, Religious, Christian, Evangelical, End Times, Armageddon, Bible, Prophecy, Israel and Church Leaders. Program titles highlighted by the resulting search were examined for more clear suggestions of content related to the study subject. Finally, programs yielded by the search were monitored for qualifying inclusion terminology.

During the month of March Sunday newspaper editions of The Dallas Morning News, San Antonio Express News, Austin American Statesman and the Houston Chronicle were each examined for content relative to the study subject. Availability of books on the subject was examined with a search of the Barnes and Noble web site, using the same list of keywords as was used for television monitoring.

(3) Evangelical Christian television media and Internet sites were searched for messages related to the Middle East and perceptions of the end time. Christian television was monitored using the same search function of the Dish Satellite Network which was utilized for mainstream media. Particular success was had in locating programming on the Angel One Satellite network, Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN), and the Trinity Broadcasting Network. A search for relevant web sites was conducted using the *Google* Search Engine and the same list of keywords which were searched for mainstream television and books.

The programming and printed material cited in the study were generally available for public consumption in Texas during the study period. Much of the content cited by the study also was programmed nationally via satellite. Not known or measured by this investigation is the extent to which there was potential for that material to form or influence public opinion. This study adopts the definition that an Evangelical Christian is one who believes in the inerrancy of the Bible, the divinity of Christ, and that Jesus Christ is the only hope for salvation (Neitz, 1984, p. 93).

### **Findings**

The national, secular media appeared in March, 2003 to have missed a significant component of American views on Middle East conflict. With few exceptions, there was little coverage of the fact that some segment of the U.S. population assigns important Biblically-prophetic significance to American involvement in Iraq. In coverage of the war provided by their networks and in interviews of local residents concerning the war, local television newscasts monitored in Austin, Texas made no mention of such sentiments. The same was generally true of the Sunday newspapers monitored, with the exception of a few items of interest.

There was some brief mention on national television which hinted at eschatological significance of the Iraq conflict. On March 11, 2003 CNN's *Larry King Live* news interview show was entitled, "Christians Debate War." It featured guests representing diverse Christian viewpoints on the invasion of Iraq. Evangelical guests included Bob Jones III, President of Bob Jones University and John McArthur, President of Master's College. Bob Jones III, declaring the United Nations a "menace to our national sovereignty," stated clearly an Evangelical view of the events of the end times: "...when the Lord Jesus comes back and wages

war, by the way, against the nations and becomes the ruler of the world; the next great world ruler. There will be peace for a thousand years when he sits himself up as the ruler of the world.” (King, 2003, March 11) Even seasoned network interviewer Larry King failed to follow up on the level to which Jones or other panelists believed the Iraqi conflict played into that end-time scenario (King, 2003, March 11). Other nationally televised comments positioned President George Bush as fighting evil in the attack on Iraq. The Chair of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Commission on Ethics and Religious Liberty appeared on CSPAN to debate in favor of the morality of the prospects for war with Iraq and declare President Bush to be “ordained by God.” for the times. “We can expect,” he told the national CSPAN television audience, “a civil magistrate, ordained by God, to punish those who do evil” (Land, 2003, March 2). Land spoke on behalf of an organization (Southern Baptist Convention) whose President Jerry Vines had recently been quoted in the media as having referred to the Prophet Mohammed as a “Demon Possessed Pedophile” (Strickert, 2002, p.2 ).

Secular print media also made little mention of eschatological meaning associated with American involvement in Iraq. A search sampling Sunday newspapers in major Texas cities yielded mostly mainstream coverage of Iraq war news and American public opinion. An end times message appearing in the Dallas Morning News, on March 16, 2003, told of a talking fish predicting the end times. The quarter page story told of a twenty pound carp, about to be slaughtered in a New York fish market, who suddenly began speaking Hebrew, “...shouting apocalyptic warnings and claiming to be the troubled soul of a revered community elder who recently died” (Kilgannon, 2003, p.9A).

Some Texas newspaper letters to the editor hinted at divine providence in the unfolding events. A letter from a reader in Carrollton, Texas said: “”God can use America to destroy the enemy, Saddam Hussein and his followers. We must avail ourselves to his plan...” (Pendergraph, 2003, p. 3J). No apocalyptic references were found in newspaper comic strips.

American President George Bush has described himself as a “born again Christian” (Strickert, 2002, p. 1.) a label suggestive of Evangelical beliefs . In a March 10, 2003 edition *Time* magazine provided some clues as to what extent Evangelical messages may be reaching and influencing President George Bush. The article certainly could have served as a signal to Evangelicals their messages were being considered. *Time* magazine reported Bush was spending his time in early mornings by reading a collection of Evangelical mini-sermons. The book, *My Utmost for His Highest*, by Evangelist Oswald Chambers was described by *Time* as relating Isaiah’s reminder that “God is the author of History” (Fineman, 2003, p. 22.). The *Time* magazine writer provided Bush speech quotes, along with the context in which they would be interpreted by Evangelical listeners:

“Inaugural Address, Jan.21, 2001: ‘An angel still rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm’ **Context:** The whirlwind symbolizes a medium for the voice of God in the books of Job and Ezekiel. West Point Commencement, June 1, 2002: ‘We are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name.’ **Context:** Bush’s references to ‘good’ and ‘evil,’ on the upswing since 9-11, imply the Biblical clash between Christ and Satan. 9-11 Rememberance , Sept. 11, 2002: ‘And the light shines

in the darkness, and the darkness will not overcome it.’**Context:** A reference from the Book of John to the coming of Christ” (Fineman, 2003, p. 28.).

The references come from a President whom Evangelicals see as a “Born Again Christian” with the implication that he shares their beliefs (Balmer, 2003, p. 7). Evangelical author and speaker Charles Stromley, appearing on Trinity Broadcasting Network opined, “Children of Israel have been taught to seek out and destroy the haters of God. ...George Bush, a born again Christian through the blood of Jesus Christ is doing the right thing. ...(of Bush) He is a Godly man, crying out to God.(Stromley, 2003, March 8).”

Also available to make some contribution to public perceptions was a book popular during March, 2003 which should, by the nature of its availability, be considered a segment of the secular genre reporting on Middle East Events. Showing up at the top of the list in a subject search of Barnes & Noble booksellers website, and seen displayed in multiple airport gift and bookstores in several major cities (Salt Lake City, Cincinnati, Dallas and Boston), the book was found with multiple copies prominently displayed in Austin’s Bergstrom International Airport on a shelf labeled, “Non-Fiction.” *Bible Code II The Countdown* by Michael Drosnin, listed here as secular only because it was written by a self described non-believer in God (Drosnin, 2002, p. 5), purports to convey specific prophecies of the end time as unlocked by a Jewish statistical scholar who deciphered a code locked in the books of the Old Testament. The book clearly identifies Iraq, September 11, 2001, The United States, and President Bush in Biblical prophecy. It predicts the year 2006 as the Bible-prescribed end time for earth (Drosnin, 2002,p p. 13, 18, 21.) The source is additionally interesting because the

author claims to have been in contact with Bush White House officials and to have written to President Bush at least two times to tell of the Biblical prophecy for Bush's involvement in the end times.(Drosnin, 2002, pp.185 and 186) The author sent such a message to President Clinton and met with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and with the son of Israeli Prime Minister Sharon (Drosnin, 2002, pp. 4, 256) to deliver messages concerning their involvement in end time scenarios. The book and its predecessor *The Bible Code* did not appear to be embraced by the Evangelical community and found no reference on their web sites or programming, perhaps primarily owing to the author's claim that the eschatological events he described probably could and should be precluded by human actions, a concept seen as heretical in Evangelical circles. The concept of Biblical code inspired by the book does appear in Evangelical books and movies (<http://www.TBN.org/>).

The Evangelical media monitored for the study carried numerous overt and covert messages with eschatological meanings. Prominent in the listings of broadcasts was a clear support for Israel in the conflict. Evangelical leader Jerry Falwell has pledged to the national Rabbinical Assembly to mobilize 70-million conservative Christians for Israel (Strickert, 2002, p. 2). Seen as a mixed blessing for Israelis, the prophetic positioning of such support is based on a belief that some Jews will believe in Jesus Christ and be "saved" during the apocalyptic period, but that others will become the cannon fodder of the Battle of Armageddon (Shupe, 2001, p. 416.). The Angel Network received via a *Dish* satellite network subscription, carried several programs designed to convert Jews to Christianity and garner support for Israel. The programs included *Israel Vision* and *Jewish Voice*. A *Jewish Voice* program featured several, leading Evangelical Christians commenting on Israel:

“Your strong commitment and support of , and love and understanding for, the Jewish people clearly reflects God’s heart and his plan, his purpose, not only for Israel, but for the whole world,” said Dr. James Dobson host of the program Focus on the Family and described as one of the most powerful members of the American conservative movement (Swomley, 1998, pp. 40-41.) .

“God promises to Bless those who bless his chosen Jewish people, “ Bill McCartney, Founder of Promise Keepers International was seen commenting. Even singer Pat Boone was shown: “This ministry is getting the job done in a very innovative way” (*Jewish Voice* , Angel One Network, March 11, 2003). These comments should be understood in light of comments heard from some Evangelicals that Jews will go to hell if they do not accept Jesus Christ as their “Personal Saviour” (King, 2003, March 11 ). If , as has been alleged, U.S. secular media is pro-Israel in their reporting (Ackerman, 2001, p. 62), some Evangelical Christian influence could account for that bias.

The Christian Broadcasting Network has been said to reach thousands of cable systems and 60 satellite outlets. (Stacey and Shupe, 1982, p. 291.) Creating an appearance of being as mainstream as possible in the format of their news presentation, Pat Robertson’s Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) offered regular news reporting on the war. CBN’s *700 Club* maintained a reporter, Paul Strand, as a CBN war correspondent embedded with the troops in Iraq, featured military Colonel William Taylor providing analysis, Melissa Charbonneau reporting from the White House, Chris Mitchell on the aircraft carrier Roosevelt and quotes from “U.S. unnamed intelligence sources” (Robertson, 2003, March 27). The reports also included video of American military troops undergoing Evangelical, immersion Christian Baptism in the

field, and occasional religious/patriotic public service type messages. One such message, promoting “Operation Prayer Shield,” pictured President Bush on screen as an announcer proclaimed, “I have a Father, he calls me his own, he knows my name” (Robertson, 2003, March 27).

Calling the war “one between Christians and Moslems,” declaring Islam a “false religion” and proclaiming, “Who are we kidding the United Nations is a joke,” Pat Robertson, added, “I met with President Bush a few weeks ago and told him, the Arabs recognize strength, if you show strength, they will fall in line” (Robertson, 2003, March 17). Context for Robertson’s comments can be found in previous appearances. On June 9, 1992 on the 700 Club program, referring to the battle of Armageddon, Robertson said: “The whole thing is now in place. It can happen any time to fulfill Ezekiel....The United States is in that Ezekiel passage, and ... we are standing by” (Swomley, 1999, p. 8.). In his book *The Secret Kingdom*, Robertson speculates about a war in the Middle East ‘in which oil supplies to Europe and elsewhere are cut off’ (Swomley, 1999, p. 9). It is of additional interest to note that at least one of Robertson’s organizations has been reported to be a recipient of a “Faith Based” government grant from the Bush administration ([www.au.org/press/pr021003.htm](http://www.au.org/press/pr021003.htm))

Other programming spelled out more specifically the Evangelical view of prophecy and unfolding events. The weekly nationally televised program *God’s News Behind the News* proclaimed that Iraq was Babylon as described by Biblical Prophecy. “We have stepped over and crossed a threshold in time into a season, a moment in time in history, that the Bible prophecies will be the culmination of this age. The age in which you and I live, Jesus declares, will be the final generation of this planet,” claims Dr. Joe VanKoevering. (Jefferies, 2003, March 17) The

program promoted an upcoming “Prophecy Conference” of Evangelical Christians meeting in Tulsa, Oklahoma. It also promoted a series of tapes from the “2002 Prophecy Conference.” In those tapes (excerpts of which were seen later on the Angel One Network), Iraq is described as Babylon of Bible prophesy. It is said that the Bible predicts how Russia and the Arab countries will align against Israel and the United States. “Saddam has stated openly his plan to bring the Jews in chains back to Babylon,” the speaker declares. Stating further that “...the Bible wrote the script a long time ago and it is being played out,” (Karlsson, 2003, April 1) The speaker, Evangelical prophecy guru and author Grant Jeffery, lays out the ways in which the Bible even describes who the American allies will be in the fight with Iraq. (*Angel Update*, Angel One, April 1, 2003) The Babylon theme was also carried by CBN (which featured in item on its web site claiming Iraq to be the site of ancient Babylon, in Trinity Broadcasting Network website depictions of the conflict (<http://www.tbn.org>), and in Christian Rock Music lyrics depicting a battle against Babylon. (<http://www.christianrock.net>) Another Evangelical prophecy guru, whose eschatological book *The Late Great Planet Earth* sold more than two million copies, (Lamy, 1992, p. 11 ) posted on his web site a Hal Lindsey Oracle Commentary which cited prophecy claiming the United States would rebuild Babylon in Iraq, and it would become a world economic center before it is ultimately destroyed in the end times ([http://www.hallindseyoracle.com/article\\_print.asp?ArticleID=1984](http://www.hallindseyoracle.com/article_print.asp?ArticleID=1984)). Iraq is considered to be the symbol of Babylon, the archetypical enemy of God’s chosen people. The ruins of Babylon lie about 50 miles south of Baghdad in what Hillah. In the book of Revelation, the destruction of the “harlot” Babylon is used metaphorically for the final destruction of the world. (Lamy, 1992, p. 9)

Evangelical eschatological messages are distributed to younger Evangelical Christians through Christian rock music. The audience for the Christian music genre is estimated to account for 10 to 13 percent of American popular music sales. Retailers such as K-Mart and Wal-Mart and the Columbia House mail order club distribute Christian Rock (Gow, 1998). Lyrics associated with eschatological themes appear to relate specifically to the messages of the Evangelical prophecy gurus. A search of the web site ChristianRock.Net using key words “Armageddon” and “End times” yielded Lyrics from several groups, including a song by the group WhiteHeart:

“What could be better than living in Babylon

But their strength was just an illusion

Now this city lies in broken ruins

Bye, bye, bye Babylon”

(<http://christianrock.net/songinfo.asp?songcode=0382&userid=>)

From the group POD comes the song “*Set Your Eyes to Zion*” and the lyrics:

“Stick to the track and don’t be trapped by Babylon

set your eyes on Zion”

(<http://christianrock.net/songinfo.asp?songcode=01519&userid=>)

Also from POD the song “*Set It Off:*”

“Count down to the final hour

Here we come

Chant down dem Babylon”

(<http://christianrock.net/songinfo.asp?songcode=30232&userid=>)

Video and audio Evangelical messages of Iraq and Babylon, Armageddon and the end of the world could be reinforced in greater detail for Evangelical media consumers by the availability of hundreds of books on the subject. Writers including Tim LaHaye, Jerry Jenkins, Hal Lindsey and Charles Dyer have prolifically filled bookstore shelves with such material. A search of the Barnes and Noble bookseller web site revealed more than 400 listings by author Tim LaHaye, often writing with Jerry Jenkins. Among those were 49 titles for children. Tim LaHaye's children books included: *Escape from New Babylon* and *Secrets of New Babylon*. Adult Tim LaHaye titles include: *Left Behind*, *Armageddon*, *Desecration: The Anti-Christ Takes the Throne*, and *The Mark: The Beast Rules the World*. LeHaye and Jenkin's book *Left Behind* sold 30-million copies. (Kellner, 2001, p. 22)

One of the latest offerings from LaHaye and Jenkins is *The Remnant: On the Brink of Armageddon*, an Evangelical apocalyptic novel which is set in part in "New Babylon" (seen by Evangelical prophecy gurus to be post-American invasion Iraq) (LaHaye and Jenkins, 2002, p.6). The book can offer some insight as to the context in which Evangelical Christians see expected world events. "The Enemies" serving Satan and listed in the book include a character described as "A former Secretary General of the United Nations." (LaHaye and Jenkins, 2002, p.7) The writing brings to life pre-Armageddon events as actual occurrences. It makes specific reference to converting 144,000 Jews to Christianity as a part of a "tribulation" period preceding Armageddon (LaHaye and Jenkins, 2002 p. 256.). Author LaHaye appeared to be involved in more than just writing Acopalyptic thrillers. His name appeared with of Jerry Falwell and others in an April 2002 advertisement in the Jerusalem Post assuring Israelis of the prayers of the Christian Right (Strickert, 2002, p.3).

In a Barnes and Noble booksellers web site search Hal Lindsey titles were 45 works including: *The Everlasting Hatred: The Roots of Jihad*, *There's a New World Coming*, *Where is America in Prophecy*, *The Final Battle*, and *Vanished Into Thin Air: The Hope of Every Believer*. A Hal Lindsey Video, *Where is America in Prophecy* in 2001 was selling 1500 copies per month. (Kellner, 2001, p. 22)

A book by Dallas Seminary Professor and author Charles H. Dyer , *The Rise of Babylon: Sign of the End Times*, has a prominent picture of Saddam Hussein on the front cover. The Publisher's Book Review says in part: "Saddam Hussein rebuilt Nebuchadnezzar's palace in the ancient city of Babylon. ...Every day that passes brings us closer to the end times...this book shows how Iraq fits into the Bible's prophecies of the last-day events." Barnes and Noble has the book listed with their sales rank of 792. Given the thousands of books at the online bookseller, the rating would suggest a heavy readership (<http://www.barnesandnoble.com>). It is known that the book sold 400-thousand copies just during the weeks of the buildup to Desert Storm (Kellner, 2001, p. 22) Dyer's book echoes the sentiment of numerous other writers that Iraq is the Babylon of Biblical prophecy. That sentiment is in the context of the New Testament book of revelation, chapters 14-18. It is a view which sees the destruction of the new Babylon: "And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power, and the earth was made bright with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice saying, Babylon the great is fallen, and is become the habitation of demons, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine and the wrath of her fornication...Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine, and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judgeth

her.” (King James Version of the Bible. Revelation 8:1-3 and 8)

Some movies echo the same book of Revelation based, Evangelical apocalyptic sentiment. Produced by Paul Crouch’s TBN, and written by Paul Crouch, *The Omega Code* echoes a Bible code eschatological theme which is popularized by Michael Drosnin. It is an Evangelical apocalyptic thriller. [\(Http://www.tbn.org/movies\)](http://www.tbn.org/movies). A sequel, *Megiddo*, more specifically addresses the details of the end time. DVD’s of both movies feature interviews with author/media mogul Paul Crouch and with Evangelical prophecy guru Hal Lindsey (<http://www.tbn.org/movies>) .

In the review of information available to media consumers during a brief study period, there appeared to be a substantial effort on the part of Evangelical Christians to lend prophetic Biblical context to events in the Middle East, particularly Iraq. Thus, for some, the Evangelical media appeared to be exercising elements of a “Cultivation theory”: cultivating or creating a world view that, while possibly inaccurate, becomes reality simply because people believe it to be so and base their judgments of the real world on it (Baran and Davis, 1995, p. 372). The fact that individuals in which that theory has been cultivated may hold powerful positions in our society may be troubling to some Americans. At the same time, the secular media’s failure to recognize or attempt to quantify the significance of apocalyptic beliefs which may be widely held in the American society seems to have violated a social responsibility on the part of the media to project a representative picture of the constituent groups in society and to present and clarify the goals and values of the society (Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1942).

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