

JEWS AND THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT

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Although Jews are generally critical or suspicious of the Christian Right, the two groups do have points of nonconflicting intersection: (1) Jews play a significant role in Christian Right theology, (2) they have common political ground in support for Zionism/Israel, and (3) several individual Jews are leading or supporting figures within the Christian Right itself. Why these Jews are involved in this conservative religious movement is explored.

Although many aspects of the Christian Right have been examined, such as its historical roots (Ammerman, 1991; Diamond, 1995), leaders (Fitzgerald, 1981), innovative methods of operation (Frankl, 1897), and social and political impact (Bates, 1993; Boston, 1993; Bruce, 1992; Capps, 1990; Conway & Siegelman, 1982; Diamond, 1989; Johnson, 1985; Jorstad, 1981; Liebman & Wuthnow, 1983; Lienesch, 1993; Moen, 1992, 1989; Reichley, 1985; Shriver, 1981; Vaid, 1995; Wilcox, 1994, 1992; Zwier, 1982), no work has been done specifically on how the Christian Right is related to Jews.

Earl Raab (1996, p. 44) notes that "Jews have regularly rated Christian fundamentalists as the American group most inimical to them," and Norman Podhoretz (1995, p. 30) observes that "most American Jews are liberals...and have lined up behind policies that are repugnant to the conservative Christian community." However, Jews and the Christian Right do have relatively non-conflicting points of relation.

After describing the Christian Right, this article examines the areas of intersection between the Christian Right and Jews. This examination will add to our understanding of the Christian Right's ability to attract allies from seemingly oppositional groups in carrying out its social and political agenda, as well as explore the role some Jews play within this conservative movement.

As the most consistently democratic-liberal voting white ethno-religious group in the country (Johnson, 1985; Kosmin &

Lachman, 1993; Raab, 1996; Reichley, 1985), Jews are not involved with the Christian Right in any substantial numbers in terms of grassroots activity, voting response, or financial support. However, they are nonetheless significant to the Christian Right: first, Jews figure centrally into the religious belief system of the Christian Right; second, mutual ground has been found between various Jews and the Christian Right concerning Zionism/Israel, and finally, a few Jews have surprisingly proven to be some of the strongest allies and leaders of the Christian Right.

THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT

An amalgam of multimillion dollar media empires, sympathetic politicians, grassroots organizations, and millions of money-pledging supporters, the Christian Right mixes conservative political aspirations with fundamentalist, evangelical Christian beliefs in an attempt to influence American politics and society.

Bolstered by an ever-growing tie to the Republican party (Kosmin & Lachman, 1993; Moen, 1992), the activities of the Christian Right include everything from supporting military dictators in Central America to winning seats on local school boards (Bates, 1993; Diamond, 1989).

Conservative Christian social and political activism currently permeates the United States: The anti-gay movement is gaining momentum in state after state; one of the largest grassroots movements in American politics today is the Christian Coalition;

and the Christian Right dominates the Republican Party in more than eighteen states, with significant influence in thirteen others (Stan, 1995). In the 1994 elections, a liberal lobbying group monitored 600 state and local races and found that 60 percent of the candidates backed by the Christian Right won election to office (Diamond, 1995).

Today's Christian Right is concerned with issues of anti-homosexuality, anti-women's equality, anti-reproductive rights, anti-separation of church and state, and opposition to the teaching of sex education in public schools—all embedded within a hyper-patriotic, free-market capitalist ideology that is marked by social critiques of the needy and unrelenting attacks against welfare legislation (Lahaye, 1980; Robertson, 1990).

Combining a potentially intolerant moralism based on a literal interpretation of the Bible with a nostalgic yearning for the mythical "Leave it to Beaver" patriarchal family structure, the Christian Right is working hand in hand with the Republican party to shape American society and politics along lines that some would consider quite threatening. According to activist/author Urvashi Vaid (1995, p. 310), the Christian Right is a "militantly antidemocratic movement that is turning American constitutional democracy inside out.... Prejudice, injustice, inequality, intolerance, hatred, violence are all evils being strengthened by the religious and supremacist right."

MAJOR ORGANIZATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT

The four primary organizations of the Christian Right throughout the 1980s were the National Christian Action Coalition, the Religious Roundtable, Christian Voice, and Moral Majority (Moen, 1992). The successful registration of millions of new conservative voters and the sound defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment, the Nuclear Freeze Initiative, public funding for abortions for poor women, and funding for AIDS research are but a few examples of

the Christian Right's significant influence throughout the 1980s (Diamond, 1995; Johnson, 1985; Kosmin and Lachman, 1993; Lienesch, 1993).

Currently, the most formidable Christian Right organization is the Christian Coalition. Led by Pat Robertson and Ralph Reed, who has developed strong ties with Newt Gingrich and Jesse Helms, this organization has over one million members with more than 870 chapters (Vaid, 1995) and an annual budget of \$25 million (Stan, 1995). The Christian Coalition is one of the best-organized grassroots political movements in the country. For example, in 1990, it targeted San Diego for political influence. Its efforts were overwhelmingly successful, as 60 candidates (of 88) affiliated with the religious right were elected to city and county positions. Three hundred Christian Coalition delegates attended the 1992 Republican National Convention. In 1995, the Christian Coalition's intention to influence politics was revealed in its "Contract with the American Family," a loud call for an evangelical Christian presence in all levels of American society, which was warmly embraced by the Republican majority in Congress. One of the Christian Coalition's projects is fighting for the repeal of the constitutional separation of church and state, which Robertson has succinctly labeled "a lie of the left" (Vaid, 1995). The Christian Coalition vowed to spend over \$1 million to help defeat President Clinton's health care plan (ADL, 1994).

The exact number of Christian Coalition delegates who attended the 1996 Republican National Convention is uncertain. However, a Times/CNN poll conducted in August 1996 claimed that 11 percent of delegates were members of the Christian Coalition, with an additional 55 percent claiming to "favor" the organization. Republican candidate Bob Dole has openly embraced the Christian Coalition. Bowing to Christian Right pressure, he ensured that the Republican platform remained strongly anti-abortion, and in mid-September he spoke at

the Christian Coalition's annual meeting in Washington. He appeared on stage with Pat Robertson, clasping hands and joining him in calling on God's help in the upcoming election.

Other major conservative Christian organizations include anti-gay movements, such as Colorado for Family Values and the Oregon Citizens Alliance. The American Freedom Coalition is a large, grassroots movement that fights funding for public schools and environmental protection (Moen, 1992). With an annual budget of \$62 million, the Promise Keepers, led by Colorado for Family Values board member Bill McCartney, spreads the message of male dominance within an evangelical Christian context (Diamond, 1995). Anti-feminist organizations, such as Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum and Concerned Women for America (with a budget of \$10 million), have been quite active, with membership possibly reaching close to 500,000 (Moen, 1992; Vaid, 1995). Pat Robertson's American Center for Law and Justice wields its \$6 million budget to fight against the separation of church and state; Dr. James Dobson's Focus on the Family, with a budget of \$90 million, fights against the separation of church and state, secular public education, and the civil rights of homosexual Americans; Robert L. Simonds' Citizens for Excellence in Education utilizes its 1,700 chapters to secure Christian influence in public schools (ADL, 1994).

Pat Robertson

Pat Robertson has maintained his stature above all the televangelists who fell amidst public scandal during the 1980s, such as Pat Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart, and Oral Roberts. He has even outshone Jerry Falwell as the most well-known, active, and successful Christian Rightist. He is the host of the "700 Club" (the most-watched evangelical television show in history), founder and head of the Christian Broadcasting Network (the second largest cable TV network in the United States), and the author of nu-

merous religio-political books. Pat Robertson, in the words of Walter Capps (1990, p. 181), "is the personification of the Religious Right."

Robertson's attitude toward Jews is one of well-noted contradiction. On the one hand, he is a staunch public supporter of Israel and in recent times has made several open gestures of good will toward the American Jewish community. On the other hand, he is notorious for his steady stream of anti-Semitic sentiments. In his book *The New Millennium* (1990), he charges that all religions that deny the deity of Christ are satanic at root (p. 77); liberal Jews are intent on "diminishing Christian influence" in America (p. 289) and are out "to destroy the Christian position" (p. 290); and "Jewish intellectuals and media activists" have waged an assault on Christianity (p. 292). Although repeatedly noting the special relationship between God and the Jews, Robertson also repeatedly makes it clear that there will be no room for Jews in his new millennium, for "the destiny of this nation is in the hands of the Christians" (p.311). Furthermore, Robertson continually equates abortion with Nazi genocide and has asserted that "what Nazi Germany did to the Jews, so liberal America is now doing to the evangelical Christian. It's the same thing" (ADL, 1994).

In his more recent work, *The New World Order* (1991), which made the *New York Times* bestseller list, Robertson sets forth a conspiracy theory in which Jews are the culprits. Jewish bankers and Jewish revolutionaries are portrayed by Robertson as central players of a sinister/demonic plot to take over the world (Lind, 1995).

The Foot Soldiers

Studies reveal that those most likely to become activists, money-pledgers, and voters for the Christian Right are white fundamentalist evangelical Protestant Christians (Hunter, 1985; Johnson, et al., 1989, 1984; Stacey & Shupe, 1983; Wilcox, 1989, 1992; Zwier, 1982). According to Liebman and

Wuthnow (1983, p. 231), "The New Christian Right represented a new turn in politics. For the first time in many decades, evangelicals found a political voice which they could claim as their own." Although most fundamentalist and evangelical Christians are not involved with the Christian Right, within the Christian Right itself, the majority of members are fundamentalist and evangelical Christians. Moreover, it is the religious beliefs of these fundamentalist evangelical Christian supporters that provides the first connection between Jews and the Christian Right.

JEW: CENTRAL TO CHRISTIAN RIGHT RELIGIOUS DOCTRINE

It is quite likely that most Jews in America today cannot tell the difference between a Presbyterian and a Pentecostal Protestant. However, the same cannot be said about the reverse. Quite the contrary: over and above the obvious fact that the Bible that they cherish was written by and about Jews, Christian evangelical fundamentalists consider contemporary Jews to be very significant components of their religious world view. Jews are central to their religious activism, and as Conway and Siegelman (1982, p. 167) observe, there is an "almost obsessive preoccupation with Jews, Judaism, and the state of Israel displayed by many spokesmen for the fundamentalist right."

The key to understanding this obsession is found in the Christian Right's theological perspective, which is grounded in a popular, widely held outlook based on biblical prophecy, sometimes referred to as Armageddon theology. Jews are essential components in this theology.

Hal Lindsey, long-time member of various Christian Right organizations such as the Religious Roundtable, promulgated a clear picture of Armageddon theology and its popular "End Times" eschatology in his 1970 book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*. It has sold over 35 million copies and is the

number one nonfiction best-seller (aside from the Bible) in the history of the United States (ADL 1994; Bates, 1993). Lindsey's book is grounded in a popular Christian belief system that has always been present in Christian theology (Barr, 1977), but appeared most vigorously on the American scene some 100 years ago in the teachings of John Nelson Darby; this belief system is known as "premillennial dispensationalism" (Boyer, 1992; Weber, 1979). The premise of this core doctrine is as follows.

The history of the world is viewed as the unfolding of dispensations, or eras, the last of which is to be the millennium—a thousand years of peace and harmony on earth. A special reading of the Bible (most importantly, the Jewish prophets Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah and the Book of Revelation in the Christian Testament) concludes that certain predictions for the return of Christ are coming true, most notably those ushering in the return of Christ. However, before Christ returns to earth, there will be seven years of Tribulation (in short, hell on earth), during which time the Anti-Christ will arise. This period of Tribulation will be so bad that, according to Lindsey, it "will make the regimes of Hitler, Mao, and Stalin look like Girl Scouts weaving a daisy chain by comparison" (Lindsey, 1977, p. 99). Then, as a culmination, the battle of Armageddon will take place. Christ will defeat Satan and reign over the earth in peaceful harmony for 1,000 years (the millennium).

Within this scenario, the "Rapture" is a central component. During the horror of the seven years of Tribulation and the apocalyptic battle between Christ and Satan, truly believing Christians will be spared; that is, called up to heaven in the blink of an eye (the Rapture) and saved from all the earthly calamity that nonbelievers will have to endure. As it is written in Matthew 24:37-41, "There will be two men in a field; one will be taken, the other left; two women grinding at the mill; one will be taken, the other left." Or in the words of Jerry Falwell:

You'll be driving along in an automobile... You're a Christian. There'll be several people in the automobile with you, maybe someone who is not a Christian. When the trumpet sounds you...will be instantly caught away—you will disappear (Diamond, 1989, p. 133).

In short, the Rapture and Christ's eventual triumph could come at any moment. How does one know? Because Jews are fulfilling the prophecies. As Michael Lienesch (1993, p. 229) contends, "In the eschatology of the New Christian Right, Israel is the key."

According to Hal Lindsey, and other televangelists, evangelical fundamentalist preachers, and Christian Rightists, the creation of Israel was a key fulfillment of biblical prophecy signaling the beginning of the gruesome last days before Christ's triumphant return. In Lindsey's (1970, preface) words:

Hebrew prophets...predicted that as man neared the end of history as we know it...there would be a precise pattern of events...and all this would be around the most important sign of all—that is the Jew returning to the land of Israel....The Jew is the most important sign to this generation. [Lindsey, preface]

For Lindsey and millions of like-minded premillennialists, Jews have several important functions. First, with the establishment of Israel in 1948, certain biblical signs associated with Christ's earthly return are seen as "coming true." Thus, making aliyah, as did emigres from Russia, is of utmost import. Second, as Lindsey further explains, a "False Prophet" will come to power preceding the horrific times of the Tribulation. He will be the ally of Satan and "is going to be a Jew." This False Prophet Jew will be a "master of satanic magic" who will have "control over the economics of the world system." This "ally of Satan" status for the False Prophet Jew is only a minor improve-

ment from the premillennialist rhetoric espoused by Armageddon theologian/preacher Gerald Winrod, who back in the 1930s, predicted that the Anti-Christ himself would be a Jew (Ammerman, 1991).

Finally, with the defeat of the anti-Christ (and his Jewish ally), "one third of the Jews alive during this period will be converted to Christ and miraculously preserved." Pat Robertson (1990, p. 294) declares: "Then, according to the Bible, the Jews will cry out to the one they have so long rejected, and He will come in heavenly power to give them deliverance... then we will have a reign of peace on earth known as "The Millennium."

Armageddon theology, thus, reveals a contradictory impulse toward Jews. On the one hand, the return of Jews to Israel is to be encouraged, and Jews are to be positively supported in their endeavors to strengthen Israel as a sign of the hastening of the End of Times. On the other hand, it is anticipated that most Jews will suffer terribly during the period of Tribulation and that only those Jews who converted to Christ in the end will be redeemed. In other words, Jews, though supported as important players in biblical prophesy, are eventually to be punished for their heretical refusal to embrace Jesus as the Messiah.

Although seeming almost implausible as just so much phantasmagoria, Duke University religious historian Grant Wacker concludes that "premillennialism proves to be one of the most resilient and widely held belief systems that has ever gripped the American imagination" (ADL, 1994). Dwight Wilson (1977), in his study of prophecy belief in the United States, gave a conservative estimate of 8 million committed premillennialists. Paul Boyer's (1992) extensive survey of Armageddon theology supports his conclusion that "prophetic belief remains deeply rooted in the United States." Even former President Ronald Reagan (quoted in Boyer, 1992) publicly espoused premillennial convictions. Citing similar biblical passages as those quoted by

Hal Lindsey, in the 1970s Reagan asserted that "the day of Armageddon isn't far off... Everything is falling into place. It can't be long now. Ezekiel says that fire and brimstone will be rained upon the enemies of God's people. That must mean that they'll be destroyed by nuclear weapons."

While a presidential candidate in 1980, Reagan declared, "We may be the generation that sees Armageddon" (quoted in Diamond, 1989) and while in the White House, his premillennialism grew, as he explained to a lobbyist for Israel: "I turn back to your ancient prophets in the Old Testament and the signs foretelling Armageddon, and I find myself wondering if we're the generation that's going to see that come about" (Boyer, 1992).

Having considered the important position Jews hold within Christian Right religious doctrine, we then ask, How has belief in this religious doctrine been manifested politically? According to Sara Diamond (1995, p. 94), premillennial dispensationalism is "a doctrine with deep implications for the later politics of the Christian Right." This leads us to the second area of investigation regarding Jews and the Christian Right—Israel.

Zionism and Israel: Common Ground

The Christian Right advocates absolute support of Israel. Pat Robertson (1990, p. 286) has warned, "So long as this nation has any concern for God's favor, we cannot turn our backs on Israel. Throughout Scripture, the prophets warned that God will judge the nations that stand against Israel."

"When it comes to formulating foreign policy," notes Lienesch (1993, p. 230), "those in the New Christian Right consider American support for Israel to be an absolute requirement." Commenting on various studies, Boyer (1992, p. 193) concludes that "white evangelical Protestants are Israel's firmest backers in America, except for Jews."

In the aftermath of much liberal criti-

cism aimed at Israel after the post-1967 occupation of the West Bank and the 1975 United Nations resolution condemning Zionism as racism, many Jewish organizations and leaders "were willing to put their misgivings aside and develop ties with evangelical and fundamentalist Christians" (Levitas, 1995).

Thus, it is on issues surrounding Israel that Jews and the Christian Right come the closest to seeing eye to eye. The Christian Right takes a hard-line stance in support of the Jewish state, and for the most part, Jews and Israelis happily welcome and encourage that support (Halsell, 1986:145-16). According to Michael Lind (1995), "many Jewish neo-conservatives value fundamentalist support for American military and economic subsidies to Israel."

In 1980, then Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin gave Moral Majority leader Jerry Falwell a medal of honor, the Jabotinsky Prize, in recognition of all his efforts on behalf of Israel. A year later, Rabbi Abraham Hecht, president of the Orthodox Rabbinical Alliance of America, complimented Christian Right leaders such as Jerry Falwell for their "integrity" and "values" (Shriver, 1981).

In 1988, Israeli government and military leaders, including Colonel Yehuda Levy of Entebbe fame, met with Christian broadcasting executives in order to furnish their televangelists with appropriate propaganda to counter the criticisms of Israel's repression of the Palestinian intifada (Diamond, 1989). Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum of the American Jewish Committee, whom Levitas (1995) notes as pioneering Jewish-evangelical relations in the 1960s, remarked that Jews should form closer ties with right wing evangelical Christians because of their pro-Israel stance. In recent years, Israeli officials have been regular guests on Pat Robertson's "700 Club," and Robertson has donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to help Russian immigrants settle in Israel.

Christian Zionists—that is, American evangelicals who manifest their religious

zeal through working on behalf of Israel—have formed several pro-Israel organizations, including the International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem (ICEJ), which engages in activities that range from selling Israeli bonds, promoting tours of Israel, and helping Soviet immigrants donate blood for the Israeli military (Levitas, 1995). ICEJ, in its desire to hasten the End of Times, has maintained strong ties with the most extreme fringes of Jewish nationalism in Israel, those who wish to blow up the Dome of the Rock Mosque, the Muslim holy site, in order to rebuild the Temple (Diamond, 1995). American Christian Zionists see the rebuilding of the Temple by Jews as yet another sign of the coming of Christ, and thus have donated money to defend two Jewish fanatics in Israel arrested for attempting to blow up the Mosque (Levitas, 1995). In addition to this support of the most fanatical fringes within the anti-Arab Israeli camp, ICEJ has also been active in Honduras, supporting the military activities of the pro-fascist Contras (Pieterse, 1992).

Other major Christian Zionist organizations include Bridges for Peace, Christians' Israel Public Action Campaign (which has strong ties with the hard-line group, Americans for a Safe Israel), and Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry. According to a Gallup poll, they are approximately 40 million Christian Zionists among the 60 to 70 million evangelical Christians in the United States (Silow-Carroll, 1995).

Another Jew who has capitalized on Christian Right support for Israel is Orthodox Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, who has raised some \$2 million as a central member of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, also led by evangelical Christian Rightist Pat Boone (Silow-Carroll, 1995).

Noting such Jewish leaders as Rabbi Eckstein, who have formed alliances with various elements of the Christian Right, leads us to a third and final area of scrutiny: the few Jews who work for and with the Christian Right.

Jews and the Christian Right

More than any other ethno-religious group, Jews are supporters of liberal politicians and leftist causes, whereas the opposite can be said for the Christian Right, which is characterized by support of arch-conservative politicians and right-wing causes (Kosmin & Lachman, 1993). Furthermore, the vast differences between these two groups go beyond politics; many Jews harbor a warranted suspicion of the Christian Right, which, at least in the earlier half of the century, espoused a rather blatant brand of anti-Semitism typified by the vicious words of Reverend L.K. Smith and Reverend Gerald Winrod, the publication of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* by Henry Ford, and the radio pontificating of Father Charles Coughlin. Many Jews who may not be familiar with the recent problematic writings of Pat Robertson perhaps recall the infamous words delivered by the Reverend Bailey Smith in 1980 to 15,000 members of the Southern Baptist Convention:

It's interesting at great political rallies how you have a Protestant to pray, a Catholic to pray, and then you have a Jew to pray. With all due respect to those dear people, my friends, God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew (ADL, 1994).

Despite the persistent political and religious differences between the two, many Jews are active members or supportive allies of the Christian Right.

Recently, when I mentioned that several Jews are active in the Christian Right to a Jewish friend of mine, she replied, "Well, sure, you'll always get a few Jewish *meshugenahs* [crazies] in any movement." Although it may be possible to write off the few Jews involved with the Christian Right as nothing more than a handful of *meshugenahs*, their presence and activism are nonetheless worthy of attention.

Several rabbis have actively embraced the Christian Right in their staunch support

of Israel. Yet, the peculiar alliance transcends the confines of Israel and Christian Zionism.

Perhaps the most influential, upper-echelon Jew involved within the Christian Right is Howard Phillips. Along with Paul Weyrich, whose stated goal has been the "Christianizing [of] America" (Reichley, 1985), and Richard Viguerie, Howard Phillips (a former Nixon Administration official and aide to Jesse Helms) is one of the leaders of what political analysts have dubbed the New Right. According to Richard Viguerie, it was Howard Phillips, along with Paul Weyrich, who first made a concerted effort to persuade the top televangelists, such as Jerry Falwell, James Robison, and Pat Robertson, to become involved in conservative politics (Conway & Seigelman, 1982). Robert Boston (1993) credits Howard Phillips as being almost single-handedly responsible for conceiving and establishing the Moral Majority; in short, according to a report in *Mother Jones* (Dec., 1995), Howard Phillips was decisive in helping to turn the religious right into the political force it is today. Influential in several Christian Right organizations, Phillips has commented: "I have considerable respect for Reverend Falwell, who helped wake people up to what was going on in the country" (Moen, 1992, p. 22). In addition to his work with Falwell and the Moral Majority, Phillips also founded and led the right-wing, evangelical-allied Conservative Caucus in the 1980s. An outspoken opponent of women's reproductive rights, Phillips has labeled Planned Parenthood "Murder Incorporated." He gained public notoriety during a run at the presidency in 1992, in which the television campaign ads he ran in Iowa were replete with footage of bloody discarded fetuses. Currently, Phillips heads the US Taxpayers Party, which supports Pat Buchanan for president, the same Pat Buchanan who, when addressing a Christian Coalition conference in 1993 declared, "Our culture is superior because our religion is Christianity and that is

the truth that makes men free" (Vaid, 1995, p. 307). Like his partners in the Christian Right, Phillips couches his political activism within a strict religious world view. "I believe that God does judge a society, and that a society that shows so little regard for God's creation in terms of human life and in other ways, is one from which He withdraws His hand of protection" (Stan, 1995).

In addition to Howard Phillips, there are other Jews within the upper echelons of the Christian Right. In 1993, the Christian Coalition hired Marshall Wittman as its first full-time lobbyist in Washington, D.C.; Wittman thus became the highest-ranking Jewish member within that organization (ADL, 1994). In addition to Wittman, Rabbi Daniel Lapin is active in the Christian Coalition, addressing members at their annual Road to Victory conferences. Rabbi Lapin, who now heads the conservative organization *Toward Tradition*, took out a full-page ad last year in the *New York Times* defending the Christian Right. Seventy-five Jewish conservatives signed the ad, including Irving Kristol and Elliott Abrams (Levitas, 1995). Kristol, in a 1984 *Commentary* article, strongly urged Jews to embrace Christian fundamentalist support. Other Jews who have strong ties to the Christian Coalition include syndicated columnist Don Feder, a partner of Lon Mabon in his crusade against homosexual Americans; Marshall Berger, President Reagan's former liaison to the Jewish Community; and Hollywood film critic Michael Medved (ADL, 1994).

In addition to the various Jewish figures listed above, a most disturbing connection between a Jew and the Christian Right comes to light in the co-authorship of a little-known but potentially dangerous book published in 1995, *The Pink Swastika*. A vicious pseudo-historical account that places blame for the Holocaust in the lap of homosexuals, this book was co-authored by Scott Lively (second-in-command of the Oregon Citizen's Alliance) and Kevin Abrams, an Orthodox Jew living in Jerusa-

lem. That an Orthodox Jew residing in Israel would contribute to the blatant disfiguration of the history of the Holocaust at the expense of a singled-out, persecuted minority is quite alarming. Taking their argument to its disturbingly obvious conclusion, Lively and Abrams conclude that the gay rights movement in America today is a neo-Nazi movement with direct links to the Third Reich and that the only way to stop an impending American Holocaust is through the defeat of the gay rights movement.

However, despite the fact that it was co-authored by an Orthodox Jew, the book itself comes as no surprise. Homosexuals constitute the new evil for conservative Christian America, and the Christian Right (of which Scott Lively's Oregon Citizen's Alliance is a vanguard organization) has been the central force in constructing and persecuting this new scapegoat.

Homosexuals are to the Christian Right what Jews were to post-World War I German society. The Christian Right blames homosexuals for virtually every problem in American society and is currently fighting for the removal of basic, constitutionally provided civil rights for homosexual Americans. In the ominous words of Pat Robertson (1990, p. 185), to allow homosexuals any place in our society "is nothing short of lunacy." Robertson's sentiments and the active political movement of the Christian Right to remove constitutional protections for homosexual Americans are both the product and source of heightened homophobia within the United States. Diamond (1989, p. 101) warns, "The enmity of the Christian Right toward gay people is potentially the most dangerous element of its ideology and political game plan."

CONCLUSION

To understand why the Christian Right has been interested in Jews and Jewish endeavors, one need look no further than the realm of religious beliefs. It is within the religious doctrine of evangelical Christians that

an obsessive preoccupation with Jews can be found, and this obsession has spurred various social and political outreach toward Jews, primarily in support of the state of Israel.

However, explaining active Jewish involvement with the Christian Right is a bit more difficult. There are two areas demanding explanatory scrutiny: (1) the Jewish embrace of Christian Right support of Israel and (2) the noteworthy involvement of various Jews in non-Israel-related Christian Right activity. The former involvement can be expediently explained in terms of political pragmatism: as a persecuted minority rebounding from near extermination, Jews and Israelis will understandably take support for Israel wherever they can get it, be it from American Jewish charity funds, despotic regimes, or Christian evangelicals. Whether based in reality or not, many Jews still perceive Israel as a fledgling, vulnerable outpost of Jewish life, and ethical considerations are often compromised in the interest of what is viewed as geo-political survival. As Boyer (1992) notes, the pre-millennialist-Israeli bond can be attributed to the prophecy beliefs of the former and to the *Realpolitik* of the latter.

Yet, the second area of concern—why certain Jews have gotten involved with the Christian Right outside of Israel-related issues—presents more of an explanatory challenge to the social theorist. This question is beyond the scope of this article, but one definitely deserving of further scholarly attention. Is it simply a case of deviance? Of identification with the oppressor? Of personal idiosyncrasy on the part of those particular Jews involved?

Perhaps one hypothetical possibility is that it is a unique form of Jewish assimilation into the perceived American mainstream. In this instance, I do not mean by "assimilation" the type in which a group's identity is abandoned and diluted—after all, most of the Jews involved with the Christian Right are Orthodox. Rather, I mean a type of assimilation in which a minority

group still maintains its overt religious/cultural identity and yet identifies with or embraces certain social values or political goals of the dominant majority group. As Michael Lerner observes in his recent book *Jewish Renewal* (1994):

The key to assimilation in America has been the absorption of the dominant values of the larger society: materialism, selfishness, acceptance of the economic and political status quo....One could be extremely observant of Jewish ritual, perhaps even be a bearded Hasid, and still assimilate in this sense (p.161).

In other words, the Jews described in this article are abandoning traditional American Jewish liberalism for contemporary Christian conservatism, though maintaining their observant religious identities with vigor. There are many avenues other than religious abandonment or intermarriage through which assimilation is possible; in this case, it is the political avenue. By integrating themselves with socio-political movements of powerful, conservative, right-wing, white Christian Americans such as the Christian Coalition, some Jews who nonetheless remain religiously observant are able to forge personal alliances that are empowering in terms of opportunity and prestige, despite the fact that the goals of such movements are perceived as threatening and misguided by most of their fellow American Jews. But whatever the reasons behind Jewish involvement with the Christian Right, questions about Jewish political identity are raised. Will the few Jews within the Christian Right remain exceptions, or will more Jews follow them in their move toward Christian conservatism? We shall see. For now, these Jews undoubtedly remain a conspicuous—but noteworthy—minority within the American Jewish community.

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