

# premillennialism and the paranoid style

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In his 1965 essay on "Millenarian Scholarship in America," David E. Smith argued that "if millenarism is, as recent scholarship persuasively recommends, a centrally-informing concept behind the idea of progress, revolutionary messianism and radical social utopianism, then the American past offers a rich field for the student of the history of the idea." Smith urged scholars to probe five fertile areas of investigation: a re-assessment of the concept of the millennium in the colonial period, a study of the role of chiliastic thought in nineteenth century utopian communities, a synthesis "of millennial assumptions about history itself: something which might be termed 'the vision of eschatology,'" a study of the apocalyptic image in American literature and the role of millenarian thought in nativist movements as well as in the thought of the abolitionists. It is to the first portion of the last appeal, the "need to examine more fully than we have the manifestations of millenarism in the perversities of the Nativist movement," that the present study is directed.<sup>1</sup>

Millenarian movements may be broadly defined as social movements which anticipate imminent, total, collective, this-worldly salvation. They most readily appear in an atmosphere of disaster so severe that large numbers of people suffer sufficient anxiety to force them to question their entire value system. Commonly millennial movements exhibit an ideology deriving principally from Judeo-Christian messianism with frequent references to the reappearance of Jesus, the creation of a thousand year Kingdom of God and the Last Judgment. Although the exact nature of the new social order is most often vague, it still represents a quest for this-worldly, revolutionary change in the appeal to replace a totally-evil present order with a totally-good utopian order.<sup>2</sup>

Richard Hofstadter's essays on right-wing political behavior contain peripheral references to "the apocalypticism of the paranoid style." In fact, in stressing the international applicability of the paranoid style, he drew a parallel with Norman Cohn's European study, *The Pursuit of the*

*Millennium.* Hofstadter frequently cited chiliastic tendencies evident in American nativist movements, ranging from the anti-Masonic warnings of "The Battle of the Great Day Just Before the Millennium" to references to Robert Welch, founder of the John Birch Society, as a leader whose style resembled "religious millenarians." Hofstadter referred to the apocalyptic Antichrist in the 1798 sermon of Timothy Dwight, revealing the machinations of "the sins of these enemies of Christ," "atheism of the Dragon," the "rapacity of the Beast," "dragoons of Marat" and "the concubines of the Illuminati." Similarly, Hofstadter noted the absolutist nature of the paranoid style in the total struggle against evil with no room for compromise, whether Lyman Beecher writing of the Protestants' "life-or-death struggle with Catholicism" or the more ecumenical post-World War II pattern of anti-Communism in which "Christianity is set forth as the only adequate counterpoise to the communist credo." The threats of the evil forces described were as impending as in any millennial movement, whether referring to the 1830 anti-Masonic warnings of "the most imminent danger" of Masonry or the urgings of Samuel F. B. Morse five years later that the Catholic "serpent has already commenced his coil about our limbs, and the lethargy of his poison is creeping over us."<sup>3</sup>

It should be noted that millenarian movements are often classified in two general groups along ideological lines, postmillennial and premillennial. Postmillennial movements reflect an optimistic, evolutionary view not found in the paranoid style. These groups contend that humans can construct their own millennium; indeed, are in the midst of building it through a gradual transformation of their character and social institutions without any supernatural or cataclysmic actions. Taking a liberal, progressive, optimistic view of life, the postmillenarian argues that Jesus will reappear only at the end of the millennium.<sup>4</sup>

By contrast, and much more in keeping with the paranoid style, are adherents of premillenarianism, a more pessimistic, revolutionary view. Rejecting social reform, the premillenarian has no faith in social progress and believes that all existent religious and secular institutions are thoroughly infested with satanic influences. Thus a pessimistic, presentist view exists, one which predicts worsening conditions prior to the destruction of existent institutions and creation of the utopian order in the sudden revolutionary, absolute change resulting from the actual second advent, the fiery destruction of the Antichrist on the fields of Armageddon followed by the personal reign of Jesus at the head of the millennial order. Consequently, the premillenarian insists that Jesus will appear before the creation of the millennium rather than afterward as in the case of the postmillenarian.<sup>5</sup>

Contemporary American history abounds with nativist fervor, ranging from the revival of the Ku Klux Klan in 1915-30, to the Silver Legion of America in the depression decade, and such post-World War II movements as the Christian Crusade and Twentieth Century Reformation.

Each of these groups exhibited typically nativist characteristics; that is, each was a strongly defensive, nationalist movement among a group considering itself the patriotic defenders of a golden past against the encroachments of an alien horde, usually a racial, religious or political minority which supposedly threatened to subvert the essence of republicanism.<sup>6</sup> The leaders of these groups portrayed a conspiratorial threat to their followers in the classic paranoid style, whether William J. Simmons' scathing attacks on aliens, William Dudley Pelley vehemently denouncing Jews and Communists to the Silvershirts, or Billy James Hargis of the Christian Crusade and Carl McIntyre of the Twentieth Century Reformation each exposing an internal communist conspiracy in the post-war climate of the Cold War. A close examination of the writing of Simmons, Pelley, Hargis and McIntyre reveals a significant streak of premillennial thought as well.

For most Americans the decade of the twenties was one of bewildering changes stemming largely from the social and economic manifestations of urban industrialism. For the first time in our history, it was a decade during which the majority of the public resided in metropolitan areas, a period when the material fruits of industrial change, symbolized by the radio and the automobile, reached millions of Americans, a time of reaction to the idealism of the Wilsonian years with the emergence of heroes such as Babe Ruth, Charlie Chaplin and Charles Lindbergh and an era which significantly replaced the earlier images of the corporate leader as robber baron with that of industrial statesman. The dominant political mood of the decade underwrote the economic changes of the period as evidenced by Warren Harding's landslide victory over James Cox in 1920 and the equally impressive victory of Calvin Coolidge over John Davis four years later. The religious corollary of this mood was a national decline in church attendance, a reduction in the income and number of volunteers active in foreign missionary work as illustrated by the failure of the Interchurch World Movement, and the publication of one of the most popular books of the era, Bruce Barton's *The Man Nobody Knows*, heralding the business acumen of Jesus.

Yet the defenders of an earlier day of less complicated, small town ways loudly resisted the changes of the twenties. Opposing the teaching of evolutionary creation in the public schools, the fundamentalist crusade of the decade gained attention through the 1925 Scopes trial and the national efforts of the World's Christian Fundamentals Association. The continual inroads of liberal theology were also attacked in denominations such as the Northern Presbyterians, Northern Baptists and the Disciples of Christ. It was on the outer fringes of resistance to modernism that the Ku Klux Klan, revived in 1915 by William J. Simmons, grew during the twenties to a national force of over one million. Whether stimulated by the pressures of rapid urbanization viewed from a rural, fundamentalist perspective or from the demographic pressures of southern European immigrants and black migrants pushing outward into the

urban zones of emergence, the principal appeal of the Klan was to an intense fear of change. While the prejudice of the klansmen was at times directed at Jews, orientals, blacks, internationalists and urban bosses, the strongest appeal was to anti-alienism and anti-Catholicism. In the name of pure Americanism and in defense of Christian ideals, the KKK gathered native-born white Protestants to protect their cherished values.<sup>7</sup> Much of the campaign was couched in apocalyptic terms, describing “the inevitable conflict between the forces of traditional Americanism and the thoroughly organized legions of modernism and alienism.” The struggle could result in either of two extremes, “the sacrifice of liberty and fundamental Americanism for the devastating institutions of medieval autocracy and religious dogma, or a greater, more spiritual nation.”<sup>8</sup> The sides were drawn and the battle was to be fought between total evil and total good, the Antichrist conspirators and the warriors of Jesus.

The clearest indication of the premillennial streak in the revived Klan was the writing of its founder, William J. Simmons. A native of a small central Alabama town and son of a country physician, Simmons served with the Alabama Volunteers in the Spanish American War. Experiencing a religious conversion at a rural meeting shortly after the war, he soon after joined the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church as a circuit rider in the backwoods districts of Florida and Alabama. Unable to obtain a large, established church of his own, he left the ministry to take up a more lucrative position as salesman of fraternal insurance for the Woodmen of the World. Soon after the release of “Birth of a Nation” in 1915, the first full-length motion picture in American history, Simmons built upon its factual inaccuracies regarding the Reconstruction Klan and revived the ritual and white-sheeted garb of the earlier order, saving the leadership title of Imperial Wizard for himself.<sup>9</sup> In a 1921 pamphlet, *The Ku Klux Klan: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, and a book published five years later entitled *America's Menace, or the Enemy Within*, the Klan leader exhibited the premillennial traits of the Antichrist, dualism, imminence, the impending revolution, and the description of the kingdom of God on earth.

Simmons wrote endless descriptions of the conspiracy which threatened true Americans. It was “modern commercial greed; money madness of Mammon, subordinating character to cash; complex industrial perplexities; . . . present day political infidelity and corruption; . . . over-centralization of government; extreme governmental extravagance; the tyranny of taxation; social sham and laxity and religious shallowness and doubt; together with the pernicious propaganda and increasing, insidious influence of ‘alien’ Communistic and Bolshevik interests and activities in our midst.” The conspiracy was of the devil, an Antichrist figure incarnate, a “monstrous deception” from Hades, “the sordid satellites of Satan,” “the deadly ‘alien element,’ now in our midst” and the Imperial Wizard appealed to all klansmen to arise and “counteract its pernicious poisoning and prevent its baneful plight.” In fact, after Simmons was

eased out of the leadership of the Klan by Hiram Wesley Evans, even the KKK became infiltrated by the demonic influence: "You 100 per cent Americans look out! The enemy IS within, and is watchful and working."<sup>10</sup>

There were only two forces in the world of Simmons, evil and good, "Hades and Heaven." The klansman was pictured as a "true white American citizen who loves our great country and who glories in the name America," steadfastly guarding against the alien intruder who was "basely unworthy of the blessings of the present, and he should be forgotten by posterity." The nation was dividing into two camps: "the 'common enemy' has sensibly combined his forces; my fellow countrymen, we must properly combine our forces, else we will fail and fall ignobly, one by one, in an unpitied sacrifice, in a contemptible struggle." The climax of life was imminent, a "day of retribution," the promise that "a new day is near at hand" and Simmons warned his patriots that they must "COMBINE QUICKLY!"<sup>11</sup>

The Imperial Wizard, hoping to serve as an example of readiness, wrote that he stood "at attention, expectantly listening with all alertness for the call of Duty to go forward in a greater conquest for my Country's glory and humanity's good." The imminent revolution would erupt the "furnace-fires of tribulation." He called to the protectors of Christ and Constitution to "tighten our armour," to form "an unshakable and an unbreakable phalanx of dauntless defenders" who would "resolutely go forward in the fight against a relentless, unified and insidious foe." The Klan was destined to overcome "the advancing hordes of the enemies of our common heritage and the future of our Country's weal." The victory by the forces of goodness would result in a new day, the thousand year millennium: "We shall preserve and perpetuate the boundless blessings which we enjoy, and following the leadership of the conquering Christ we will win perpetual peace to a war-torn and a war-weary world." It was to be a world of "noble ideals of chivalry, the development of character, the protection of home and the chastity of womanhood, . . . the preservation of American ideals and institutions and the maintenance of white supremacy."<sup>12</sup>

The entire premillennial flavor is captured in a poem included in Simmons' book, "America Awake and Act or Die":

Save! Ah, Save! Thy fair, good name,  
America!  
Thy great, pure soul save Thou from  
blame, America!  
Bid patriots rise, in all their might;  
Form NOW Thy phalanx for the fight,  
To save Thy land from alien blight,  
America! My America.  
Thy Eagle screams, with pinions wide,  
America!

“Stop the encroaching Alien’s stride,”  
America!  
Shall that val’rous bird now scream in  
vain,  
And Liberty be bound and slain?  
Call all Thy sons to battle plain,  
America! My America.<sup>13</sup>

With the stock market crash of 1929, the hopes of the Twenties were snuffed, replaced by the most agonizing period of human suffering the nation had experienced since the Civil War. The electorate turned from its earlier hero of prosperity, Herbert Hoover, to the jaunty symbol of confidence in the depression decade, Franklin Roosevelt, and massive outpouring of recovery, relief and reform measures resulted. A revival of the Social Gospel was evident in large sections of mainstream Protestant churches. Even before the 1932 election, Northern Baptists, Northern Presbyterians, Episcopalians and Methodists expressed grave concerns for the shortcomings of traditional capitalism and the Federal Council of Churches urged strong federal social welfare measures in its revised social creed of 1932. More drastic solutions were championed by The Fellowship of Socialist Christians, founded in 1930. Its leading spokesman, Reinhold Niebuhr, criticized Roosevelt for his token reforms and urged more drastic structural measures to achieve meaningful social justice.

As the Roosevelt Administration offered its new deal program, economic hardship for many continued unabated while the new alphabet agencies extended the federal bureaucracy so extensively that many began to fear the creation of a socialist planned economic state. This conservative opposition was evident in the religious sector too with the growth of the fundamentalist congregations and widespread opposition to the Federal Council’s liberal social creed even among member churches. The virtues of unfettered capitalism and individualism were championed in 1935 by the Spiritual Mobilization, a group of conservative Congregationalists on the west coast, by the Layman’s Religious Movement in the Methodist Church a year later and at the 1938 Southern Baptist Convention. A 1936 survey of 21,000 Protestant clergymen showed that 70 percent expressed their opposition to the FDR legislative program.<sup>14</sup>

Other Americans, not content with the conservative critique of the New Deal, turned to the panaceas and nativist pronouncements of the demagogue. Huey Long, Gerald Winrod, Gerald L. K. Smith and Charles Coughlin all exploited the prejudices of the dispossessed with frenzied appeals of simplistic solutions to the economic complexities of the age and held conspiratorial scapegoats of Jews and Communists responsible for the depression. One such defender of “Christ and Constitution” was William Dudley Pelley, whose Silver Legion of America was described later in the decade by the House Un-American Activities Committee as “probably the largest, best financed, and certainly the best publicized of such groups.”<sup>15</sup>

Like Simmons, Pelley grew up in a late nineteenth century small town, though in New England rather than in the South. The son of a Methodist minister, he left high school before graduating to help in the family paper manufacturing firm, established by his father when he left the ministry because of its paltry income. Soon after the younger Pelley pursued a career in small town journalism, published short stories and novels and spent a good share of the 1920's in Hollywood as a scenarist. The turning point in his life came in 1928 when, like Simmons, he witnessed a religious experience which he described as spending "seven minutes in eternity." Moving to Asheville, North Carolina, Pelley turned exclusively to spiritual writing, establishing the Galahad Press and a nondenominational network of spiritual study groups, the League of the Liberators. In 1933 he formed the Silver Legion of America, later dubbed an American Nazi movement by HUAC, a group established in 22 states with a peak membership of 15,000. Through a series of publications, principally a weekly magazine called *Liberation*, Pelley harangued his readers in the traditional paranoid style.<sup>16</sup>

Unlike Simmons' vague descriptions of alien hordes and the principal Klan attack on Catholics, Pelley's attacks were specific. He described personal conspirators in high places in the federal government and he shaped his cabal around Jews and Communists. Pelley wrote of a vast international conspiracy of Jewish Sovietists which he held responsible for the disastrous new deal domestic programs as well as the eventual alliance with England and Russia, rather than with the true friends of America, the Axis nations. Contending that "it is plain that Communism and the Capitalism of Judah are bedfellows" and that "Communism is Jewry in action," Pelley identified "the Sephardi Jew, Franklin D. Roosevelt," the "First Communist President of the United States," as the head of the conspiracy in his quest to become "the first Super-Dictator of the projected World State!"<sup>17</sup>

Like the paranoid style of Simmons, the conspiratorial thought of Pelley was also firmly rooted in a premillenarian framework. The writings of the Silver Legion Chief were filled with vivid references to the millennium, variously called "the Thousand-Year Reign of the Valiant One," "a Day of Great Liberation," "the approach of the Christian light" and the "thousand brilliant years immediately ahead" when "the hosts of Armageddon await us."<sup>18</sup>

Just as the alien and Catholic were viewed as the Antichrist in the millenarian thought of Simmons, so were Jews and Communists by Pelley. Arguing that FDR personified the Jewish Sovietist devil, he insisted that "the Roosevelt Cabal" was rapidly leading the nation to "the Synagogue of Satan." Indicting the entire first term new deal recovery programs during the campaign of 1936, he concluded that "today under Anti-Christ everything's in wildest disorder." As it became obvious that the United States was becoming aligned against the Axis powers in late 1941, Pelley chose to interpret quite literally Roosevelt's assertion that if the devil

himself would fight Hitler we would accept him as our ally: "If the devil should fight Hitler, it would be substantial proof to them that Hitler was of the Christ, and that the enemies of Hitler were of the Antichrist."<sup>19</sup>

Warning that "the world's peoples are dividing themselves into two camps, Pelley wrote endlessly of "GREAT DARK FORCES" and "MINISTERS OF LIGHT," of "patriotic Christians and apostate Jews," of "the principles of Lincoln" and "those of Lenin." As is characteristic of premillennial thought, Pelley saw no gray, only white and black: "There is no comfortable middle ground where easy-going people, with a disposition to compromise, can take their stand." Consequently, when Roosevelt won an unprecedented third term in 1940, Pelley interpreted the victory as the establishment of a dictatorship: "one-half the population—Mr. Roosevelt's half—will assumedly be required to vanquish or police the other half, the half composed of vigorous, purposeful, enlightened Christians who still have the sense to handle freedom as they get it. We shall see which wins out!"<sup>20</sup>

Pelley wrote to the Silvershirts with a sense of urgency reminiscent of Simmons' appeals to the Klan a decade earlier, describing "an imminent human cataclysm," insisting "that great cosmic alterations are about to set in," warning that "the hour of battle is near" and "that a great social debacle impends." He addressed his appeal to "Silvershirts, patriots, German-Americans, and other victims of this Kosher New Deal to the present" and promised that "their deliverance draweth nigh!"<sup>21</sup> In the tradition of premillenarians such as the Millerites of the 1840's, Pelley often predicted the exact date of "the Final Tribulation" as September 16, 1936, basing this knowledge on the "astronomical system" of the Great Pyramid. In fact, he shaped a third party Presidential campaign around this imminent cataclysm in Washington state in 1936 under the banner of the Christian Cavalcade. When the great event failed to arrive as predicted, the electorate responded with a meager 1,600 votes for Pelley from a total of over 700,000 votes cast for the Presidency statewide.<sup>22</sup>

While the Day of Judgment was imminent, the premillenarian was pessimistic regarding all attempts at social reform prior to this time and ordinarily argued that conditions would continue to worsen until the onslaught of the Armageddon. Whether the NRA, the WPA or the later Atlantic Charter and Lend Lease, these were all hopeless manifestations of a humanity saturated with evil, and all were doomed to failure until the Second Coming. Consequently, by 1936 Pelley argued that the forces of Antichrist, the "brassy and mischievous leaders" of the country, must be allowed to carry the nation "to the edge of the economic chasm" with their futile plans of reform, for "I see every indication that it's the Divine intent to let Evil meet its own doom by plunging straight ahead and arriving at its own chaos." Therefore when the court packing controversy erupted in 1937, the publisher announced: "Let them pad the

High Court,” for by doing so “it brings the crisis that much swifter and the enjoyments of the aftermath that much nearer.”<sup>23</sup>

The Silver Legion leader eagerly adapted the culmination of pre-millennial thought to the atmosphere of the thirties when he predicted that “in the cool stretches of the dawn of the Great Day of Armageddon, the enlightened citizenry is assembling!” To be more precise, it was the League of the Liberators and the Silver Legion, “a great Christ Militia, swinging into disciplined ranks to challenge and annihilate the alien birthed debaucheries” of Jewish Sovietism. Referring frequently to “the Armageddon of prophecy,” Pelley urged the Silvershirts on to ready themselves for battle: “We’re Battalions Courageous, flung to a Great Destiny. Verily we’re a Cavalcade of Monarchs, marching down the stars” and “militant above us rears the majestic stature of our Commander-in-Chief.” As would be expected, he believed that the Second World War brought the Final Judgment much closer: “the war is going to come to a quick close the moment that the ‘dark forces’ in control of certain nations have been purged.”<sup>24</sup>

Following the literal destruction of the existent social order on the fields of Armageddon, Pelley envisioned the Millennium, “an entirely new social order that shall permanently abolish Ignorance, Depression, Poverty and War.” At the head of the new kingdom the “Dictator Christ” was to personally reign; “all thoughts of ‘democracy’ and representative institutions, would at once be abandoned” and in their place the word of Jesus “will be law, and nobody else’s opinions will count in the slightest, or their feelings be considered.”<sup>25</sup>

As the nation answered the call to arms to help defeat the Axis powers, the anxieties of unemployment were finally relieved only to find uncertainties of other types apparent by the time the guns were silenced. Bipolar struggle between Moscow and Washington stimulated a new foreign policy of containment which seemed alien to a people accustomed to either isolationism or internationalism, for it precluded either victory or defeat. Even worse, it appeared by 1949 that the new policy had failed when it was revealed that Russia had exploded her first atomic bomb and that China had fallen to communism. The postwar economic reconversion, the burgeoning metropolitan areas, the transfer of political power from Roosevelt to Truman and the announcements of the Fair Deal legislative program, coupled with Republican resentment for twenty years of “new dealism” all created intense domestic anxiety in postwar America and collectively resulted in the internalization of Cold War fears in the Second Red Scare of McCarthyism.

The churches responded to these unsettling conditions with a resounding growth in piety across all denominational lines, with 69 percent of the nation’s population professing an active church affiliation by the end of the fifties, as opposed to an average of 45 percent in the twenties and 48 percent in the thirties. The popularity of the writing of Karl Barth, Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr signalled a continuation of

the Neo-orthodox theology and, at the same time, new forms of civil religion blended patriotism with piety as expressed in the vague notions of religious conviction of the popular Republican successor to Truman, Dwight Eisenhower. The widespread search for peace of mind was reflected in the avid reading of the books by Norman Vincent Peale, such as *The Power of Positive Thinking*, published in 1952. There also existed a renewed interest in evangelical revivalism which appealed to conservatives within most Protestant denominations who were dissatisfied with the liberal theologians and the ecumenism of the National Council of Churches. Its undisputed leader was Billy Graham, who appealed to the public through the mass media pleas of his Evangelistic Association and as the central figure in the National Association of Evangelicals. On the fringe of this revival were a vocal group of ultraconservative Protestants who rejected not only the ecumenical movement but also considered the followers of Billy Graham too liberal. As increasing numbers felt an "Armageddon complex" in the postwar atmosphere of crisis, the nation became a fertile field for millenarian right-wing leaders. Among those who emerged were Billy James Hargis and Carl McIntyre, two of a group of fundamentalist preachers who played "a part in right-wing organizations far out of proportion to the strength of fundamentalism in the population at large."<sup>26</sup>

The only child of a poor fundamentalist family from a small Texas town, Billy James Hargis entered Ozark Bible College in Bentonville, Arkansas in 1943, a member of its original class of sixteen. Never seriously interested in academic pursuits, Hargis withdrew from the school a year later and returned home where he was ordained in the local Rose Hill Christian Church at the age of eighteen. During the next several years, he served as pastor of several small fundamentalist parishes in Oklahoma and Missouri and gained a reputation as a "baby-faced benign man who can put the thunder of revivalist fire and brimstone into his" every sermon. In 1948 Hargis formed the Christian Crusade in Tulsa, an organization which grew to a national membership of 100,000 by the late fifties through his "personal, seemingly inexhaustable dynamism." Through a wide variety of media, including television releases, lecture tours, pamphleteering, a youth organization, training centers in Colorado and Massachusetts, a missionary foundation and the establishment of The American Christian College in Tulsa, Hargis pleaded the case for anti-Communism in the name of "God and Country." By 1962 he reported an annual budget of \$1,250,000, a daily radio program carried over 200 stations in 46 states and a television viewing audience in 20 states, growing ten years later to a nationwide television audience. Through these efforts and the publication of *Christian Crusade* and *Weekly Crusade*, Hargis hoped to save "Christian Americanism" from the satanic clutches of atheistic Communism by stressing the virtues of Christ, the United States, anti-Communism and conservatism.<sup>27</sup>

The international conspiracy viewed by Hargis differed from the

papal plot and Jewish Sovietism described by his predecessors in the Klan and the Silver Legion. The world threat was the monolithic force of Soviet Communism: "Not suspecting either the depth or the extent of the Communist intrigue against America and the world, the American people by the millions are allowing themselves to become the unwitting dupes of the Communists thus cooperating in their own destruction." Like Pelley before him, he argued that through "various methods of psychological warfare" the conspiracy had spread to "men in high places," including legislators at all levels, the leadership of the labor movement and the press. The Supreme Court was clearly not immune, for Felix Frankfurter "shows pro-Communist votes" in 56 of the past 72 cases before the court and Chief Justice Earl Warren "has voted 92%" in decisions favorable to the Communist conspiracy. The assassination of President Kennedy demonstrated the severity of the enemy infiltration: there were "thousands upon thousands of trained Communist agents in this country today, some of them trained, as Lee Harvey Oswald obviously was, to be expert killers." The disruptions of the civil rights movement further demonstrated the insidious workings of the plot and "the American Negro, like the American people generally, is manipulated to suit the whim of the Communists." Hargis warned the youth of the country of a Communist master music plan hypnotizing them into submission with the music of the Beatles and he denounced the sexual revolution, x-rated movies and Satan-worship with equal fervor. He attacked the sex education programs introduced in public schools in the 1960's with a pamphlet entitled "Is the Little Red Schoolhouse the Proper Place to Teach Raw Sex?" He chastized the feminist movement and pleaded for the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment, which was defeated in his home state of Oklahoma. Finally, rather than viewing the United Nations as a symbol of international harmony, Hargis appealed to Americans to "test the Spirit of the United Nations" and "you will find that it is of Satan—against America." The international body was viewed as a part of the international intrigue, "a Moscow Declaration."<sup>28</sup>

The Communist conspiracy was seen as a literal manifestation of Satan to Hargis; "the entire left-wing movement is of the devil." Comments referring to "satanic schemes" or "the satanic father of international communism" were common in his writing; "today we find Satan incarnate in international Communism." The plot was actually produced by a Communist Antichrist force as "this battle against Communism is Christ versus antiChrist." The world was reduced to absolute right versus wrong, good versus evil, "light versus darkness," "truth and Satan," "satanic Communism" versus Jesus. And there was no middle ground; "rather than 'co-existence' and compromise, the way to victory is resistance with truth . . . that knows no compromise or seeks no surrender." Describing a simplistic conception of Americanism consisting of a vague notion of Protestant Fundamentalism and an idealization of the virtues

of republicanism, he insisted that “it is an inevitable fact that if Communism triumphs, Americanism will die.” When asking “A Communist America: Must It Be?” he responded that only two choices were possible, “Choose Christ, for Christ loves America” or “Communism, which is Satan.”<sup>29</sup>

There was always a premillennial sense of urgency about the crisis for Hargis, as America needed to “take action with historic and characteristic forthrightness and determination,” for “never has America been in greater danger, NEVER!” He was noticeably pessimistic too and conditions would steadily worsen until Americans were shocked into awareness: “This is more than sickness, more even than a sleep of death. It is Satanic co-operation in self-destruction.” The only possible relief to such an absolute conspiracy would be found in the inevitable Last Judgment on the field of battle; “only Christ can destroy the Communist menace from the face of the earth.” Hargis reminded his readers that just as Jesus is “the only invincible Savior,” so too is he “the only invincible Destroyer” and “He will destroy Communism through Christian soldiers.”<sup>30</sup>

Hargis is one of several who urged the premillennial message on post-war America; Carl McIntyre is another. A native of Ypsilanti, Michigan, whose father was a minister in the Presbyterian church, McIntyre spent much of his boyhood in a fundamentalist small town setting in southern Oklahoma. Far more interested in academic life than Hargis, he graduated from Park College near Kansas City in 1927 and enrolled in the Princeton Theological Seminary. When a liberal governing board was selected in 1929, McIntyre left the seminary with his mentor, fundamentalist scholar J. Gresham Machen, and transferred to Machen’s newly founded Westminster Theological Seminary. Graduating from Westminster two years later, he was ordained into the Presbyterian ministry and soon after settled in Collingswood, New Jersey as minister of a large, conservative, middle class Presbyterian congregation of 1,200. His severe doctrinal conservatism soon came into conflict with the liberalizing national church, resulting in McIntyre’s dismissal from the ministry by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1936 for defiance of church discipline, “not being zealous and faithful in maintaining the peace of the Church; (and) violation of his ordination vows.” His Collingswood congregation stood behind him, however, and he began his fundamentalist rebellion against organized Protestantism, first with the creation of the Bible Presbyterian Church, then the 1941 American Council of Christian Churches and the 1948 International Council of Christian Churches. The last two groups were organized as fundamentalist alternatives to the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. McIntyre eventually unified all of his groups into the Twentieth-Century Reformation “to return the church to fundamental Christian beliefs and purge it of sinister influences.” As the sixties progressed, his appeal became increasingly political and he spread the evangelical fervor through a weekly newspaper, *The Christian Beacon*, and a radio

program broadcast over 600 North American stations. His most widely publicized venture in recent years was the organization of a series of Vietnam victory marches. After conducting a small counterdemonstration amidst “an unending sea of hair” at the November, 1969 Washington Moratorium, McIntyre’s supporters paraded down Pennsylvania Avenue themselves in April of the following year armed with Bibles and flags, calling for an all out victory against Communism. On a number of other occasions the McIntyre forces took to the streets, and when the Vietnam cease fire was announced in January, 1973, “the dean of the radio preachers” denounced the settlement as “a disaster.”<sup>31</sup>

The conspirational thought of McIntyre has spanned four decades, beginning as a doctrinal antimodernism with a latent streak of anti-Catholicism and growing into a consistent stream of Cold War anti-Communism. He opposed the National and World church councils for their “philosophy generally called ‘modernism’: . . . It is not Christianity. It is also called, in certain circles, ‘liberalism.’” Like a subversive plot, this “spurious and perverted expression of . . . unbelief—for such it is—found its way into the life stream of church after church” and “gave birth in its dream to the Ecumenical Movement.” This insidious world force represented a modern Catholic Counter-Reformation “by including in its fellowship the Greek Orthodox churches, and by extending an invitation of fellowship to the Roman Catholic pontiff himself.” The 1950’s marked a transition for McIntyre as he became less concerned with Catholic roots of the conspiracy and more convinced that Russian Communism was paradoxically working through the National and World church councils. He referred often to “those who would use the church to socialize the world” and “the Communist Clergy” all operating under the guise of ecumenism, modernism and liberalism. McIntyre soon turned his sights to the most obvious secular symbol of international cooperation, the United Nations. He commonly termed the world body “an instrument for Red prestige and propaganda” and consistently called for United States withdrawal. With this background, it is not difficult to see the development of his positions in the sixties and present decade. The American support for the entrance of Communist China in the U.N. merely revealed the depth of the conspiratorial intrigue in our domestic government; it all “reveals how far the country has gone in surrendering to the demands of the Communists as they arrive to control the United Nations.” Similarly, the Vietnam peace movement of the late sixties and the Nixon withdrawal policies prompted McIntyre to urge “the unmentionable option that was so familiar during World War II—victory. It is never too late to win. It is never time to surrender.” It was high time for a “victory over Communism, victory in Vietnam, Victory under God.”<sup>32</sup>

McIntyre’s thought throughout its development has featured a pre-millenarian world view. Whether the National Council of Churches, the World Council, the United Nations or even the national government of the United States, all were serving the Antichrist. Of those religious

bodies he contended “it is sin not to establish a true church when a church body turns away to become a synagogue of Satan.” The policies of the political bodies led him to “believe we are witnessing the building of the kingdom of Antichrist.” The reason he became locked on this collision course with Satan was his insistence on viewing his world as one of absolutes. He often wrote that “to compromise in the slightest is to dishonor and destroy the faith. Truth cannot be compromised and continue to be truth. Freedom cannot be compromised and remain freedom.” That is why anything short of complete military victory in Vietnam would mean defeat; “freedom is victory over tyranny.” When President Nixon sent his “ping pong” diplomats to Communist China and then refused to greet the Nationalist Chinese team which McIntyre invited to the United States, the actions reflected “what seems to have been American policy in recent years—befriend your enemies, offend your friends.” Finally, it was this sense of dualism which prompted him to chastize the Presidential visit to mainland China. The issues of *The Christian Beacon* in late 1971 frequently contained clipout petitions to be sent to Nixon appealing for “the President of the United States not to go to Red China and further involve this nation in the deceptions, complicity, and mischief of the Communist conspiracy.” It was impossible for McIntyre to see how the upholder of “In God We Trust” could visit Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai and thereby sanction their atheistic “wickedness and slavery.”<sup>33</sup>

To McIntyre, the Second Coming has always been close at hand: mankind is anxiously “watching, watching, waiting, waiting for the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour.” The American effort in Vietnam was the precursor to the Armageddon for “our victory is the cherished goal which God has called us to seek over the forces of darkness and war. Our cause is righteous. Let us demand that the military might which God has put in the hand of our nation be used to judge and defeat the Communist aggressors in Vietnam.” If only Americans could recognize the potential danger of the Communist Antichrist and rally to defeat him on the field of battle, the thousand year kingdom of God on earth would follow, “a new world where there will be neither tears nor sorrow, death nor darkness; where the former things are passed away and righteousness dwells forever more.”<sup>34</sup>

It is apparent from a study of the thought of the leaders of the Ku Klux Klan, the Silver Legion, the Christian Crusade and Twentieth Century Reformation that a significant intersection exists between the paranoid style and premillennial thought in contemporary American social behavior. Whether the alien element portrayed by Simmons, the Jewish Sovietism described by Pelley or the monolithic evil of Soviet Communism pictured by Hargis and McIntyre, all wrote well within the framework of Hofstadter’s paranoid style. In each case the cabal was presented as an all-consuming, international conspiracy so pervasive that it had become the singular motivating force of history. Each leader was

also part of a wide millennial tradition, heralding the premillennial promise of the imminent second coming.

While firmly premillenarian, however, the thought of the four is more similar to the minority historicist tributary of that tradition than the predominant futurist position. In his recent study of chiliast thought in the Anglo-American past, Ernest Sandeen described the historicist millenarian as one who drew a graphic connection between the chronological patterns in the Books of Daniel and Revelation. The two books were interpreted literally and together they helped unlock the knowledge of the exact moment of the second coming, to occur as a bold, cataclysmic event. In addition, the historicist placed great emphasis on historical events around him as signals of the events in the Apocalypse, and some even predicted the exact date of the second advent. The shattering events of the French Revolution quickened the pace of historicist preaching in England, as represented by the sermons of Edward Irving in London and the 1826-28 Albury Conferences, a series of meetings held at the Albury Park estate of Henry Drummond. In the United States, Alexander Campbell, associated for decades with the Disciples of Christ, reflected a historicist position in his monthly journal, the *Millennial Harbinger*. The most significant American movement of this type was that of William Miller, who attracted a following of 50,000 and confidently predicted the return of Jesus for October 22, 1844.

Far more influential in Anglo-American thought, the futurist premillenarian was less convinced by chronological patterns in Daniel and Revelation and was less prone to predict the date of the second advent. Further, he usually accepted the concept of the secret rapture, a belief that the second coming would be mystical, known only to those who were in the true church. Only after the church was saved would Jesus visibly reappear on earth, pointing to what in effect were two "second comings." Rejecting any predictable chronological sequence, the futurist contended that the great event could occur at any moment. Thus he refused to accept the penchant of the historicist for attaching spiritual importance to contemporary historical events. Flowing out of the doctrinal debates at the Powerscourt conferences in England in the early 1830's the futurist position of John Nelson Darby and the Plymouth Brethren grew to dominate nineteenth century British and American premillennialism. Spurred on by Darby's seven visits to the United States during 1862-77, futurist leaders such as James Brookes, Adoniram Gordon, Arthur Pierson, William Erdman and Dwight Moody brought a high degree of respectability to premillenarian preaching by stressing the futurist position and roundly rejecting the historicism of the Millerites.<sup>35</sup>

The writing of the leaders in the present study may well reflect a resurgence of historicist premillennial thought. As in the case of some historicists such as William Miller, Pelley predicted the second advent for September 16, 1936. Like all historicists, Simmons, Pelley, Hargis and McIntyre all attached great religious significance to the historical events

around them as keys to the Apocalypse and predicted a dramatic, fiery second coming of Jesus as the climactic event of world history.

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## footnotes

1. David E. Smith, "Millenarian Scholarship in America," *American Quarterly*, XVII (Fall, 1965), 546-9.
2. A variety of studies of millennial movements exists from several disciplines. See the following as representative: Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (New York, 1961); E. J. Hobsbawn, *Primitive Rebels* (New York, 1959); Yonina Talmon, "Millenarian Movements," *European Journal of Sociology*, VII (1966), 159-200; Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Philadelphia, 1958); Harris Franklin Rall, *Modern Premillennialism and the Christian Hope* (New York, 1920); Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago, 1970). The most recent study is a comprehensive synthesis of millenarian literature from a wide variety of disciplines: Michael Barkun, *Disaster and the Millennium* (New Haven, 1974).
3. Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York, 1967), 30, 38, 17-18, 30, 13, 20-1, 17, 20; Richard Hofstadter, "Pseudo-Conservatism Revisited—1965," *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, 74. Barkun accepts the notion that "millenarian movements are instances of the paranoid style" but also argues that some examples of the paranoid style exist which are not millenarian. Barkun, 152.
4. Boettner, 4, 14, 38, 48, 136; For other discussions of postmillennial and premillennial movements see: Rall, 109; Ira Brown, "Watchers for the Second Coming: The Millenarian Tradition in America," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXXIX (October, 1952), 441, 457-8; Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth Century America* (New York, 1957), Chapter 14; George Shepperson, "The Comparative Study of Millenarian Movements," in Sylvia L. Thrupp, ed., *Millennial Dreams in Action: Studies in Revolutionary Religious Movements* (New York, 1970), 45; David Smith, 538-9; Ernest Tuveson and Ernest Sandeen draw the same distinction but use different terminology, referring to premillennial movements as "millenarian" and postmillennial as "progressive millennialist." Ernest L. Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation* (Chicago, 1968), 33-4; Sandeen, 4, 5, 13-14; A notable dissenter in the debate over terminology is Michael Barkun who rejects the postmillennial-premillennial distinction. Barkun, 5.
5. Boettner, 4-5, 142-3, 284.
6. The most penetrating studies of nativism have been written by John Higham. See his *Strangers in the Land* (New York, 1968-first published 1955); "Another Look at Nativism," *Catholic Historical Review*, XLIV (July, 1958), 147-158; In his most recent collection of essays, in which "Another Look at Nativism" appears as Chapter 6, Higham continues to define nativism as "a defensive type of nationalism" directed against religious, revolutionary or racial minorities. John Higham, *Send These To Me: Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America* (New York, 1975), 102-115.
7. Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (New York, 1967), Preface, Sections I, V; David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The First Century of the Ku Klux Klan, 1865-1965* (New York, 1965), 2-5, 33; Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 286-299. Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, 1972), Ch. 53.
8. David Brion Davis, ed., *The Fear of Conspiracy* (Ithaca, 1971), 241.
9. Jackson, Section I; Chalmers, 28-31; Higham, 286-9; Hofstadter referred to Simmons as an early example of a group of "fundamentalist leaders, (who were) anguished over the general repudiation of their beliefs and values, (and) lent their energies to political reaction." Hofstadter, "Pseudo-Conservatism Revisited—1965," 73.
10. William J. Simmons, *America's Menace, or the Enemy Within* (Atlanta, 1926), 14, 189, 172, 128, 210.
11. William J. Simmons, *The Ku Klux Klan: Yesterday, Today and Forever* (Atlanta, 1921), 3; *America's Menace*, 189, 225, 178, 218, 225.
12. Simmons, *America's Menace*, 218, 223, 226, 223, 226; *The Ku Klux Klan*, 2.
13. Simmons, *America's Menace*, 231.
14. Ahlstrom, Ch. 54.
15. U.S. Congress, House, *Report on Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States*, 76th Cong., 3rd Session, 1940, Rept. 1476, 20.
16. Pelley wrote his autobiography in 1939: William Dudley Pelley, *The Door to Revelation* (Asheville, 1939). The best scholarly book dealing with Pelley in any substantial way is Geoffrey S. Smith, *To Save A Nation: American Countersubversives, the New Deal, and the Coming of World War II* (New York, 1973).
17. *Pelley's the Silver Shirt Weekly*, 17 October 1934; *Roll Call*, 17 November 1941;

- Liberation*, 28 March 1938; *Master Councillor's Address*, One, 6; *Liberation*, 7 March 1940.
18. *Liberation*, May 1930, 1; 12 December 1931; *Silver Legion Ranger*, 28 March 1934, 1; William Dudley Pelley, *Nations-In-Law* (Asheville, 1935), 178, 349.
19. *The Mustard Seed*, October 1941, 28-9; *Liberation*, 28 March 1939, 12; *Door to Revelation*, 358; *Master Councillor's Address*, Eleven, 16; *Galilean*, 26 January 1942, 15; Writings such as this formed the basis of a federal conviction of sedition for Pelley in 1942.
20. *Liberation*, 21 May 1940, 3; *Silver Legion Ranger*, 22 November 1933, 3; *Pelley's Weekly*, 29 January 1936, 1; *Roll Call*, 10 February 1941, 10; *Liberation*, 7 April 1940, 2; 14 November 1940, 3.
21. *Liberation*, November 1930, 100; March 1931, 150; 24 March 1934, 5; *Special Bulletin*, 1 August 1941, 1; *Liberation*, 28 May 1938.
22. *Liberation*, August-September 1931, 99; January 1937, 15; *Pelley's the Silver Shirt Weekly*, 5 September 1934, 5; *Pelley's Weekly*, 11 March 1936, 1; 18 March 1936, 1; 9 September 1936, 2; 16 September 1936, 1; 4 November 1936, 8; Washington election statistics can be found in *Senate Journal of the 25th Legislature of the State of Washington* (Olympia, 1937), 18-19.
23. *Pelley's Weekly*, 1 April 1936, 1; *Liberation*, April 1937, 8.
24. *Liberation*, 28 October 1933, 12; 25 February 1933, 2; 24 March 1934, 7; *Master Councillor's Address*, Eleven, 20; William Dudley Pelley, *Nations-In-Law* (Asheville, 1938), II, 668; *Galilean*, 2 February 1942, 13.
25. *Liberation*, March 1931, 147-8; *Reality*, May 1939, 31, 30.
26. Maurice L. Farber, "The Armageddon Complex: Dynamics of Opinion," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, XV (Summer, 1951), 224; Ahlstrom, Ch. 56; Hofstadter, "Pseudo-Conservatism Revisited—1965," 74; In addition to Hargis and McIntyre, Hofstadter includes several others in this category: Robert H. Welch, Dr. Fred C. Schwarz, Dr. George Benson, and Edgar Bundy, 74-6. The biographer of Hargis, John Redekop, pointed to a whole host of leaders of groups similar to the Christian Crusade of Hargis: McIntyre, Welch, Schwarz, Dean Clarence Manion, Dan Smoot, Verne Kaub, Howard E. Kershner, Kent and Phoebe Courtney, and H. L. Hunt, John H. Redekop, *The American Far Right* (Grand Rapids, 1968), 85.
27. Redekop, 15-38; James Morris, *The Preachers* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), Ch. VII.
28. Billy James Hargis, *Communist America: Must It Be?* (Tulsa, 1960), 1, 9, 19, 110, 115, 121, 135; Billy James Hargis, *The Far Left* (Tulsa, 1964), 9; Morris, Ch. VII.
29. Hargis, *The Far Left*, 5, 8, 16, 288; *Communist America: Must It Be?*, vii, 1, 7, 42, 57, 180.
30. Hargis, *Communist America: Must It Be?*, 22, 23, 179.
31. Carl McIntyre, *Servants of Apostasy* (Collingswood, 1955), 361-362; Morris, Ch. V.
32. McIntyre, 4, 6, 130, 194, 219, 236; *Christian Beacon*, January 14, 21, September 23, October 7, 1971.
33. McIntyre, 106, 263, 325; *Christian Beacon*, December 31, 1970; September 23, 30, 1971.
34. McIntyre, 32, 34; *Christian Beacon*, 4 March 1971.
35. Sandeen, Preface, Ch. 1-4, 6, 7.