

How Pat Finally Gets Even: Apocalyptic Asteroids and American Politics In Pat Robertson's *The End of the Age*

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The *New York Times Book Review* described Pat Robertson's twelfth book and only novel, *The End of the Age*,¹ with these words, "It's sort of a cross between 'Seven Days in May' and 'The Omen,' as written by someone with the prose style of a Hallmark Cards copywriter."² My training is not in literature, so I am not really qualified to make literary judgments. But I think the *New York Times Book Review* should apologize. They should apologize to Hallmark Cards copywriters.

In short, *The End of the Age* is a hard book to take seriously. But I *will* take it seriously because I take Robertson, his accomplishments, and his ambitions seriously.³ Setting aside consideration of this book as literature, I will look at *The End of the Age* as a map of Robertson's mind, a useful guide to his religious, cultural, and political views. Robertson's novel also provides us with his "enemies list"--sketches of those who have opposed, thwarted, attacked, and ridiculed Robertson through the course of his long public career. And finally, *The End of the Age* allows us to understand how Robertson views his opponents and how he relishes the prospect of their eternal punishment.

The End of the Age begins in the year 2000--no specific day is given--when a kilometer-wide asteroid hits the Pacific Ocean near Los Angeles. The impact not only destroys that city but sets off a chain reaction of natural disasters: tidal waves, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions. With hundreds of millions dead, and billions endangered, the entire world tumbles into political, social, and economic chaos--the biblically prophesied Great Tribulation.

How does humanity deal with this crisis? In a word, badly. The President of the United States, for example, commits suicide. The Vice President gets drunk. There is widespread panic and looting. Those selling food and fuel greedily raise their prices to make a quick profit from the misfortune of others. In the ensuing chaos, Revelation's prophecy of the Beast, the Antichrist, is fulfilled. A New York City Congressman, with powers and charisma granted by the Hindu god Shiva, becomes President. He eventually establishes a totalitarian global government, the Union for Peace, with its new capital built on the site of ancient Babylon. Shot in the head by an assassin, he comes back to life and is worshiped by everyone as god incarnate.

Everyone except, as Robertson writes, "a few dedicated followers of Jesus Christ and a small handful of Orthodox Jews."⁴

Christians, persecuted by the Antichrist's brutal regime, create an underground resistance

¹.. Pat Robertson, *The End of the Age* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1995).

².. Christopher Buckley, *Apocalypse Soon*, review of *The End of the Age*, by Pat Robertson, in *New York Times Book Review*, February 11, 1996: 8.

³.. See Justin Watson, *The Christian Coalition: Dreams of Restoration, Demands for Recognition* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

⁴. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 295.

movement. They are aided by a righteous Secretary of Defense and elements of the U.S. military. The State of Israel refuses to join the Union for Peace because of Orthodox opposition.

The Antichrist vows to destroy Jerusalem and the Jewish people. He assembles a huge army at the ancient site of Meggido, or Armageddon, and then marches on Jerusalem. Despite fierce resistance, the Israelis are driven back. But when all seems lost, the Antichrist's army, and Babylon itself, are destroyed by the power of God. Then a great Trumpet blast and a shout of "NOW!" is heard throughout the world. Angels swoop down and carry off Satan, the Antichrist, and all their followers, casting them into the lake of fire, "the garbage dump of eternity."⁵ Jesus Christ appears over the Mount of Olives. And in the twinkling of an eye, the light of His Glory transforms the faithful and the earth itself. Then the faithful are caught up into the sky and enter the New Jerusalem, a gigantic bejeweled cube suspended above the earth. "The old age had ended," writes Robertson, "and the reign of Jesus Christ and His saints had at long last begun."⁶ The End.

ANALYSIS

Is Robertson predicting that the Tribulation will begin in 2000 and Christ will return in 2007? While Robertson's discussions of prophecy, especially in the late 1970s and early 1980s, have sometimes given the impression that he is engaged in predicting the eschaton,⁷ Robertson has consistently maintained, based on Mark 13:32, that "about that day or hour no one knows." "That knowledge, the Lord Jesus said," according to Robertson, "was strictly reserved for the Father."⁸ Even in *The End of the Age*, Robertson is careful to have one character say, "none of us can tell the exact date when Jesus will return." This rejection of date-setting, however, is immediately followed by a justification of speculation. "But we can certainly look at the signs, because He put them there to point us in the right direction."⁹ Robertson's novel is essentially his examination and dramatization of those signs. In short, Robertson is not making a hard-and-fast prediction about the year 2000 but I think he would not be surprised if this date proved correct.

Why 2000? In Robertson's case, it is not just the attraction of a round number. It is instead rooted in his long-standing interpretation of the role of America in the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. According to Robertson, the founding of America did not take place at Plymouth in 1620, but at Cape Henry, Virginia on April 29, 1607 when members of the Virginia company held "the first public prayer of the first permanent settlement in America."¹⁰ In his 1990

⁵.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 370.

⁶.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 374.

⁷.. Mark G. Toulouse, Pat Robertson: Apocalyptic Theology and American Foreign Policy, *Journal of Church and State* 31 no. 1 (Winter 1989): 80. Toulouse concluded that Robertson's sense of expectation was so strong it led him to predict that events leading to the end of the world would more than likely begin in earnest in the fall of 1982.

⁸.. Pat Robertson, *Answers To 200 of Life's Most Probing Questions* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 151. See also Pat Robertson, Comments on Millennial Madness on *The 700 Club*, Christian Broadcasting Network, April 7, 1999. A transcript is available at www.The700club.org.

⁹.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 183.

¹⁰.. Pat Robertson, *America's Dates with Destiny* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1986), 25-26. Locating the birthplace of Christian America in tidewater Virginia was unusual but useful. Robertson is a native Virginian who claimed ancestors among the early settlers. Cape Henry is, as Robertson pointed out, just twelve air miles from my office at CBN center. Robertson, *America's Dates with Destiny*, 27. Thus by heritage, blood, and proximity Robertson connected himself, his ministry, and his politics to the foundations of Christian America. Who, therefore, could be better

book, *The New Millennium*, Robertson explained the significance of this event. "Four hundred years from the beginning of America--ten full biblical generations--takes place on April 29, 2007. By some amazing coincidence--or might we not say foresight of God--the 400th anniversary of the greatest Gentile power that the world has ever known coincides precisely with the 40th year conclusion of the generation of the 'end of the Gentile power.'"¹¹ He was referring, of course, to the Israeli capture of Jerusalem in the June 1967 war as the fulfillment of Luke 21:24: "And Jerusalem shall be trodden under foot of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." And since these signs, according to Robertson, point to the Second Coming in 2007, the seven years of Tribulation would have to begin in 2000.

What if the year 2000 comes and goes without the appearance of an apocalyptic asteroid? My sense is Robertson will turn his attention to other ways of warning his fellow Christians to remain prepared. Like many who are employed in using Biblical prophecy to understand contemporary events, Robertson is engaged in a never-ending cycle of interpretation and reinterpretation in response to events.¹² As Daniel Wojcik observes, "Interpreters of apocalyptic prophecy are masterful *bricoleurs*, skillfully recasting elements and themes within the constraints of their respective traditions and reconfiguring them to formulate new, meaningful endtimes scenarios."¹³

In many novels and movies that dramatize such end-time scenarios, it is the so-called "Rapture" of all Christians that sets off the Great Tribulation. As Paul Boyer observed, "Much writing about the Rapture focused not on the joys of the redeemed, but on the catastrophe their disappearance would unleash as disintegrative processes already under way reached a crescendo."¹⁴ In contrast, Robertson's asteroid impact, the fulfillment of Revelation 8:8, "something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea," seems a comparatively more plausible triggering event for a period of profound worldwide anarchy. And unlike most premillennialists, Robertson is not a pretribulationist, or "pre-trib." Robertson is a posttribulationist, or "post-trib," because he places the Rapture after rather than before the

qualified to understand the intentions of the founders, or a better leader of Christian America's restoration? See Anne Proffitt, *Religious Rhetoric in American Political Discourse: An Examination of Pat Robertson's "America's Dates with Destiny"* (M.A. Thesis: Eastern Michigan University, 1990), 39.

¹¹.. Pat Robertson, *The New Millennium* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990), 313.

¹².. Unlike many in evangelical circles, Robertson has been reluctant to deal with the Y2K problem within a prophetic framework. Rather than embracing nightmarish here comes the Antichrist scenarios, Robertson has taken a more cautious and pragmatic stance. On *The 700 Club* he has told his viewers "According to our findings, it seems reasonable to expect the possibility of some serious dislocations as we bring in the year 2000. Robertson urged his audience to adopt an approach of Preparation, not panic in storing some food, having cash on hand, and making copies of important records. Any problems that do arise will present an opportunity for the Christian community to show leadership by responding with aid." Pat Robertson, Pat Robertson's Official Comments on Y2K on *The 700 Club*, Christian Broadcasting Network, April 7, 1999. A transcript is available at www.The700club.org.

The 700 Club web site also provides an extensive set of links to resources and news stories about Y2K. These links, moreover, tend to have what I would call a balanced or non-alarmist character. See www.the700club.org/newsstand/y2k.

For a very different view of Robertson and Y2K, see Tom Junod, "365 Days to the Apocalypse and We Still Don't Know Where to Hide the Jews," *Esquire*, January 1999: 94.

¹³.. Daniel Wojcik, *The End of the World as We Know It* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 148.

¹⁴.. Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1992), 255.

Tribulation. In *The End of the Age* Robertson bases this scenario on scriptural passages such as Revelation 6:9 and 11. "I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered for the word of God and for the testimony they held ... They were ... told to rest a little longer until both *the number* of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they *were*, was completed."¹⁵ According to Robertson, Christians will not be raptured out of this world and thus spared the sufferings of the end-times, but martyred by the forces of evil just as they have throughout history. In earlier works, Robertson has also cited Matthew 24:29-31, John 16:33, Roman 8:35, Revelation 7:13-14 to reject the notion of a pretribulation Rapture.¹⁶

The difference between the pre-trib and post-trib positions may sound minor, but the political and social implications of Robertson's eschatology are anything but trivial. Why? Robertson rejects simply waiting to be plucked out of this world before it plunges into an abyss of suffering. In his view, Christians, especially those in America, must work to bring as many persons as possible to Christ in the time left. As one character in the novel says, "There were a number of us who felt that God was actually holding back judgment from America because so many ministries in this country were leading the harvest and they needed America's resources to do the job."¹⁷ But American Christians must also work to prevent the social and political conditions that would make spreading the Gospel impossible. To Robertson, his political activities have not been about building a theocracy or ushering in the millennium through human efforts and the reformation of society based on Christianity. Robertson instead regards political activism as but a dam, and a temporary one at that, to hold back a rising tide of sin and godlessness while rushing to rescue as many souls as possible from the inevitable deluge.¹⁸

Beyond putting political involvement in the service of the Great Commission, Robertson's posttribulationism also explains one of his central preoccupations--the persecution of Christians. *Newsweek*, I would argue, was only partly correct in 1988 when it observed that, "His [Robertson's] skill at playing the victim is almost unrivaled in public life."¹⁹ Claiming victimhood is probably not a mere exercise of acting skill for Robertson. Facing the contempt of the "world" is a part of his identity and that of his supporters, and an experience that helps to bind them

¹⁵.. Quoted in Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 70. Emphasis in original.

¹⁶.. See Pat Robertson, *Answers To 200 of Life's Most Probing Questions* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 155-156, 163.

For extended expositions of the posttribulationist position see Robert H. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1973); George E. Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1956); and, Alexander Reese, *The Approaching Advent of Christ* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1937).

¹⁷.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 180.

¹⁸.. Because of his political activities, especially his 1988 presidential campaign, Robertson has sometimes been identified as, at least in part, a postmillennialist--Christ will return *after* the millennium is established by Christians. See Stephen D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 184-189.

Robertson has also been linked to the postmillennial Christian Reconstruction movement of Rousas John Rushdoony, who advocates the using the laws revealed in the Old Testament as a blueprint for a theocratically governed Christian society. For a useful survey of Reconstructionism, see Bruce Barron, *Heaven on Earth? The Social and Political Agendas of Dominion Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1992). Barron also discusses Robertson's relationship with this movement. See 53-66, 98-101.

I would argue, however, that Robertson is neither a postmillennialist nor a Reconstructionist. See Watson, *The Christian Coalition*, 109-119.

¹⁹.. Jonathan Alter and Howard Fineman, Pat Robertson: The TelePolitician, *Newsweek*, February 22, 1988: 19.

together in the grand sweep of salvation history. “It has been true throughout the ages,” Robertson wrote in 1984, “that those who are God’s messengers are often set upon and hurt by the people they have tried to warn. That kind of suffering is virtually unavoidable as long as we live in a wicked world of superstition, hatred, and ignorance.”²⁰ For Robertson, “We must recognize also that the devil and his emissaries despise Christians.... Persecution is simply part of living as a Christian in this world.”²¹ He has urged American Christians to expect more such suffering in the future.

Throughout history there have been successive martyrdoms of Christians, and it is the height of arrogance to assume that only twentieth-century Christians in the United States of America will be spared any kind of persecution.²²

Robertson, as a political candidate, and as leader of the Christian Coalition, has often accused Democrats, liberals, the media, and even other Republicans, of “anti-Christian bigotry.”²³ Victimization rhetoric, of course, is utilized across the political spectrum. But in Robertson’s case this victimization is integral to his whole understanding of human history as a battle between the servants of God and the servants of Satan.

Robertson described the servants of Satan in his 1991 book, *The New World Order*, in terms of an international conspiracy to bring about a godless socialist one-world government, the “new world order,” under the leadership of Satan’s emissary, the Antichrist.²⁴ While the manipulation of the world financial system has been an important vehicle of this conspiracy,²⁵ a crucial step in the establishment of this new world order has been the restriction, repression, and elimination of the influence of Christianity. Why? Robertson explained: “The institutions of the church, evangelical Christians (who actually believe what they profess), and any other recognition of God would be obstructions to his [Satan’s] plan.”²⁶ Robertson wanted his readers to understand that “Satan will launch a war against the Christian people.” And it will begin with “false propaganda, ridicule, and demeaning comments--anything to ruin the influence of Christians and their ability to block Satan’s plans.”²⁷

In *The End of the Age*, a television ad executive, who comes to Christ during the Tribulation period, tells us “Those of us in Hollywood told each other that Christians were money-grubbing, Bible-thumping, fundamentalist crazies.”²⁸ Other characters refer to evangelicals as “a little weird,”²⁹ as “weird holy rollers,”³⁰ and “crazed fundamentalists.”³¹ Once the Antichrist achieves power, however, this escalates beyond ridicule. Members of “Peace and Beauty Battalions,” a Hitler Youth-like organization created by the Antichrist, are taught to worship

²⁰.. Robertson, *Answers to 200 of Life's Most Probing Questions*, 22-23.

²¹.. Robertson, *Answers to 200 of Life's Most Probing Questions*, 156.

²².. Robertson, *Answers to 200 of Life's Most Probing Questions*, 156.

²³.. See Watson, *The Christian Coalition*, 39-41, 129-139.

²⁴.. See Pat Robertson, *The New World Order* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1991). Especially helpful in understanding his view of the basic pattern of human history is the chapter The Great Divide, 249-268.

²⁵.. See Robertson, *The New World Order*, 117-43.

²⁶.. Robertson, *The New World Order*, 176.

²⁷.. Robertson, *The New World Order*, 257.

²⁸.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 142.

²⁹.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 32.

³⁰.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 281.

³¹.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 335.

Shiva and “express ridicule, disgust, and hatred for Christians and Jews.”³² In accordance with Rev. 9:1-11's prophecy of the fifth trumpet, non-Christians are horribly tormented by hordes of demons for five months. But those who bear “the seal of God”--real believers in Christ--are unaffected. In the aftermath, “Those who had suffered began to turn on those who had not suffered. First, there was envy, then bitterness, then physical violence.”³³ Those labeled “fundamentalist unaffected” are attacked by angry mobs and treated as “outcasts and renegades--enemies of society.”³⁴ When Christians refuse to take the “Mark of the Beast”--a “microchip tattoo” on the back of the hand--they are deprived of their jobs and possessions and forced to “compete with rodents and wild dogs and cats for scraps of rotting garbage.”³⁵ Others who refuse the Mark are tortured and put death for the amusement of the Antichrist himself.

Many of the fictional characters responsible for this horrific scenario bear a striking resemblance to real life objects of Robertson's contempt and enmity. Beyond warning his readers about whom not to trust at “the end of the age,” Robertson's fictional portraits may be a way of “getting even” with contemporary nonfictional opponents by revealing the hidden evil or weakness that lurks in their hearts.

For Robertson, that evil is rooted in Indian religion. The man who becomes the Antichrist, Mark Beaulieu, is driven by guilt over his immense inherited wealth to hate Capitalism, Christianity, and all of Western civilization. Beaulieu is serving as a Peace Corp. volunteer in India where he is chosen by a Guru, Raj Baba, to receive unimaginable occult secrets and powers from Shiva. “When he left six months later,” Robertson writes, “he was controlled and directed by powerful demonic forces.”³⁶

In America, Beaulieu is guided by Tauriq Haddad, a mysterious billionaire who, despite a Muslim name, is also a servant of Shiva. Haddad is clearly “the dragon,” the second beast of Revelation 13. Using the machinery of the new world order conspiracy, Haddad engineers Beaulieu's rise to power through deception, blackmail, and multiple assassinations. Beaulieu makes Haddad the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board. When Beaulieu is shot in the head by an assassin, it is Haddad who raises him from the dead in fulfillment of Rev. 13:3. Haddad then becomes the Bishop of the worldwide Church of Eternal Peace, which worships animatronic statues of Beaulieu. (It is also Haddad who delivers the book's most memorable lines: “Get your people ready. Tonight the gods have given America into our hands.”³⁷)

As one would expect, Robertson condemns “demonic” New Age religions for their Indian influences. Robertson also takes a swipe at his fellow “Christians.” Liberal Professors at elite Divinity schools rush to endorse Beaulieu. When the Antichrist is raised from the dead, Robertson has “the leading professor of Christian apologetics at the University of Chicago” tell the press, “I can say without hesitation that Mark Beaulieu embodies all that we have hoped for in the Messiah. Last night, the entire world witnessed god become man, and man become god.”³⁸ Robertson also notes that not all “Christians,” only those derided as “fundamentalists,” were protected by the “seal of God” from Revelation 9's five months of demonic torments. What the Antichrist's regime calls “Good Christians” presumably join in the mob attacks on the “fundamentalist unaffected.” The status of other religious traditions is more ambiguous, if not

³².. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 298.

³³.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 299.

³⁴.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 300.

³⁵.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 336.

³⁶.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 170.

³⁷.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 115.

³⁸.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 295.

worse.

While there are a number of individual good Roman Catholics in this story, there are no priests or members of religious orders.³⁹ And the stance of the Vatican toward the Antichrist's "Church of Eternal Peace" is simply not discussed. Other religions fare worse. Despite the admission that "devout Muslims" would be unwilling to worship Beaulieu,⁴⁰ the presumably Islamic ruler of Iraq, Ibrahim bin Ishmael, follows Beaulieu and asks him to build his new capital at the site of ancient Babylon. Armies from Islamic, or formerly Islamic, nations, such as Iran and Libya, also gather at Meggido for the final attack on Jerusalem. Robertson's treatment of Judaism is also ambiguous--but in such a different and important way that I have to will return to that topic below.

Robertson also despises the spineless politicians--no party labels are used--who allow the triumph of evil. As I mentioned, a nameless President, who did not evacuate the West Coast because he feared the political repercussions of a false alarm, is so overcome with guilt that blows his brains out on national television. When the Vice President, Ted Rust, hears this, he gets falling-down drunk. Rust is interesting because he combines all the weaknesses that Robertson probably sees in Ted Kennedy (an alcoholic), Ronald Reagan (a former actor who has to read everything off note cards), and Bill Clinton (a selfish womanizing weakling ruled by his wife, a manipulative New Age feminist harpy). Once Mark Beaulieu becomes Vice President, Rust is quickly assassinated--a cobra concealed in a birthday present from his Chief of Staff. The door to this coup d'etat is opened by Rust's wife, Valery--yes, that does sound like Hillary--who calls upon Tauriq Haddad to "help" her husband. Valery, who has engaged in "secret liaisons with assorted lovers--male and female,"⁴¹ does manage a few tears at the funeral. But she is more concerned with Beaulieu's offer to make her Secretary of Health and Human Services and with her plans "to install her radical sisters in key government posts."⁴²

Another tool in this coup d'etat is Percy DuVal, the head of the White House personnel office, a secret homosexual who is blackmailed by Haddad with a videotape of DuVal having "group sex with a number of very young Ethiopian boys."⁴³ DuVal protects himself by rushing through a security clearance for a White House Chief of Staff/Presidential Assassin, Benjamin Benares--yes, Benares, like the city in India. Other career bureaucrats in the process "play ball" to protect their own careers. As Chief of Staff, Benares, with the support of Valery Rust, engineers Beaulieu's selection as Vice President and then assassinates President Rust with the cobra. Haddad then has Benares killed. DuVal is also killed by Haddad under circumstances reminiscent of those surrounding the death of Deputy White House Counsel Vince Foster in 1993. DuVal's death, like that of Foster, is officially ruled a suicide--a parallel that would not be lost on the likely audience of Robertson's book.⁴⁴

After climbing to power over this pile of bodies, President/Antichrist Beaulieu then sets about destroying the American government. Robertson is clearly having fun as he describes the Beaulieu's rather strange cabinet appointments. "For secretary of energy," writes Robertson, "he [Beaulieu] named a Lebanese Shiite Muslim who was a member of the terrorist group, Hezbollah,

³⁹.. Robertson, however, does cite the Pope's 1997 announcement of Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 as evidence of God's final harvest of souls before the end comes. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 142.

⁴⁰.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 223.

⁴¹.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 59.

⁴².. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 256.

⁴³.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 164.

⁴⁴.. See Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 258.

and ran a filling station in Dearborn, Michigan.” A Buddhist monk becomes Secretary of Education and a Harvard professor of Eastern religions, with ties to the Japanese Aum Shinri Kyo sect, is put in charge of the State Department. And the new Attorney General is a “militant black feminist attorney” who wants to close the prison system. “It was almost as if,” Robertson observes, “the new president was deliberately attempting to ridicule the agencies of the United States government in order to create sentiment for their destruction.”⁴⁵ It is worth noting, however, that Robertson has Beaulieu keep the Treasury and Defense departments in the hands of men who are qualified and competent. Robertson thus indicates that management of money and the military are the core functions of the U.S. government.

Other political “leaders,” who should display courage in this crisis, are simply spineless and contemptible. When Beaulieu announces his “Union for Peace,” a nameless Speaker of House rushes to endorse it calling Beaulieu “a savior.”⁴⁶ No American or foreign politician, except for Orthodox members of the Israeli Knesset, ever opposes Beaulieu. And the American public, wanting only “strong leadership,” gives the Antichrist a 90 percent approval rating.

The portrait of the news media is particularly negative--no surprise given Robertson’s relations with journalists.⁴⁷ A group of reporters going to Chile on the Vice President’s airplane for the state funeral of General Augusto Pinochet is described as “a school of barracudas” devoid of “courtesy or respect.” Robertson also tells us that these reporters are on the trip only because there might be “an assassination, a riot, or some other diplomatic screw-up.” Robertson describes only one reporter in detail, the obnoxious Sven Larson, a *New York Times* editorial writer and “a sixties Marxist” going on the trip only to “trash the now-dead Pinochet.”⁴⁸ (Larson is probably based on *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis, who, I think it is fair to say, despises Robertson as well as Pinochet.⁴⁹)

Robertson settles another old score by telling us that the *Washington Post* engages in “criminal extortion” but is “so powerful it routinely operated above the law.”⁵⁰ The media are also criticized for anti-Christian bias. “There were many key people in the media in the United States,” observes one character, “who considered the rise of the Christian Faith to be a dangerous thing. They hoped to persuade Americans to reject Christianity by trumpeting the sins of several errant evangelists.”⁵¹ This is, of course, a reference to Bakker-Swaggart “televangelist” scandals of the late 1980s that damaged Robertson’s presidential hopes. Other than this, the media are only mentioned in passing as they uncritically applaud President Beaulieu.

Compared with these vivid villains, the heroes of Robertson’s novel seem rather bland. Not surprisingly, all these heroes are, or become in the course of the story, Christians. But what about Jews? Robertson never mentions Reform or Conservative Jews, but he does portray the

⁴⁵.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 274.

⁴⁶.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 261.

⁴⁷.. For a useful look at Robertson’s relations with the media during his presidential campaign, see Lloyd Grove, Robertson, Taking Aim At the Critics: A Campaign Plagued by Rocky Relations With the Press, *Washington Post*, February 22, 1988: 28. See also, Watson, *The Christian Coalition*, 36, 40, 132-134.

⁴⁸.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 61-62.

⁴⁹.. For Lewis’s view of Robertson see, Anthony Lewis, Merchants of Hate, *New York Times*, July 15, 1994: A27. And for his view of Pinochet see, Anthony Lewis, To Speak Against Evil, *New York Times*, March 27, 1987: A31.

For Robertson’s quite opposite evaluation of Pinochet see, Pat Robertson, *The Turning Tide* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993), 45-48.

⁵⁰.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 85.

⁵¹.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 140-141.

Orthodox positively. Because of the Orthodox parties, the State of Israel does not join the Union for Peace. When the Antichrist attempts to win them over with a speech at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, it is a “black-robed Orthodox Rabbi” who calls him an impostor and leads the crowd to drive the Antichrist from the stage by throwing stones.⁵² And it is the Israelis who fight the last desperate battle against the forces of the Antichrist. Other than the aforementioned, but nameless, Rabbi, there are no Jewish characters in the novel. And when Christ returns, we neither see the Jews dropping into “the garbage dump of eternity” nor ascending into the New Jerusalem. Neither damned nor saved, the Jews are a loose end in this story. This, of course, reflects a widespread ambivalence among premillennialists toward the Jewish people and their role in the end-times.⁵³ Robertson’s failure to deal with the final disposition of the Jews may also reflect the intense criticism Robertson was facing in 1995 over the alleged anti-Semitism of his 1991 book, *The New World Order*.⁵⁴ Rather than add to the controversy, he may have elected to say as little as possible.

Many of Robertson’s Christian heroes are in hiding at “El Refugio,” a commune in the mountains of northern New Mexico. The El Refugio Christians include both evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholic laity. Most are white, but we also meet a Latino family and an African-American--a professional basketball player. Their skills are practical and no mention is made of any artists, poets, or musicians within their ranks. Most of what these characters do, however, is hold an inductive Bible study through which Robertson preaches against America’s current sins. “Over a period of twenty-seven years [1973-2000],” explains one character, “the American government gave protective constitutional status to the butchering of forty million innocent unborn children. It was as if the highest court in the land repeatedly jabbed its collective finger into the eye of Almighty God--as if to defy Him, to challenge Him to do something about it.”⁵⁵ The Bible studies are also used to explain what God “does about it”--the eschatological scenario to be played out in the rest of the novel. Life at El Refugio, of which we only see glimpses, combines well-ordered simplicity and cleanliness with advanced technology. It is a foretaste of millennial harmony that is undisturbed by the old divisions of class or race, or by intra-Christian disputes over doctrine or ritual.

The founder and charismatic leader of El Refugio is “Pastor Jack,” the Reverend John Edwards--yes, a descendant of *the* Jonathan Edwards. Edwards is so obviously Robertson’s alter ego that it is sometimes embarrassing to read his display of vanity. On a superficial level, this vanity is expressed through physical descriptions of Edwards as “a man in his seventies with the lean, muscled torso of a prize fighter.”⁵⁶ But a more serious expression of Robertson’s vanity rests in the importance of “the prophet Pastor Jack”⁵⁷ in the fulfillment of God’s design. After a successful career as a minister and religious broadcaster that parallels aspects of Robertson’s life,

⁵².. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 334.

⁵³.. See Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 128-157; Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, 181-224.

⁵⁴.. See Michael Lind, Rev. Robertson’s Grand International Conspiracy Theory, *New York Review*, February 2, 1995: 21-25; Michael Lind, On Pat Robertson: His Defenders, *New York Review*, April 20, 1995: 67-68; Jacob Heilbrunn, His Anti-Semitic Sources, *New York Review*, April 20, 1995: 68-71. See also See Gustav Niebuhr, Pat Robertson Says He Intended No Anti-Semitism in Book He Wrote Four Years Ago, *New York Times*, March 4, 1995: 10; Pat Robertson, Two Letters and Excerpts from Book, *New York Times*, March 4, 1995: 10; and Norman Podhoretz, In the Matter of Pat Robertson, *Commentary*, August 1995: 27-32.

⁵⁵.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 190.

⁵⁶.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 340.

⁵⁷.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 338.

Edwards is led by the Lord in 1995 to establish El Refugio “to be a resource for people all over the world”⁵⁸ in the coming chaos of the Tribulation. It is not only a place of physical refuge from persecution for 10,000 Christians, El Refugio is also a center of spiritual resistance to the Antichrist regime. Edwards has the radio, television, and computer equipment for broadcasts known as “The Voice of the Mountains” that provide news, inspiration, and coordination for the “Christian Resistance” underground network. (Think of it as *Radio Free Europe* meets *The 700 Club*.) El Refugio has no military defenses but God protects it with two immense “luminous columns” which are, according to Edwards, angels. (Strangely, there is no *direct* allusion to the two pillars that watched over Israel during the Exodus.)

But Edwards and the Christian Resistance have two important allies in Washington’s corridors of power--the Secretary of Defense, Al Augustus, and the Secretary of the Treasury, James Wong. In government service after successful careers in industry and finance, neither man was a “churchgoing Christian” but both had boyhood born-again experiences. They discern Beaulieu’s sinister intentions and secretly work together to stop him.

James Wong embodies a number of Robertson’s interests. From a wealthy mainland Chinese family that lost everything because of Mao, but rebuilt their fortunes in Hong Kong, Wong represents Robertson’s anti-communism and his deep interest in East Asian commerce.⁵⁹ Using Wong, Robertson also presents his analysis of the world financial system. And perhaps most important, Wong is an appeal to Robertson’s readers to support world missions because Wong was saved through the work of a missionary to China. Offered unimaginable wealth and power if he will take the “Mark of the Beast,” Wong refuses, saying “Jesus Christ is my Lord”⁶⁰ and is killed on the spot by the enraged Antichrist.

Wong’s heroic martyrdom, stands in stark contrast to the path taken by his American-born wife, Joyce Cumberland Wong--yes, all three names are used, like Hillary Rodham Clinton. A non-Christian from an old money family, she was neither immoral nor amoral. “She was,” writes Robertson, “pure and simply, secular. She lived life on only one level--the level of the materialist.”⁶¹ She has no qualms about serving the Antichrist and even becomes his consort after he murders her husband.

Al Augustus is Robertson’s device for praising businessmen who go into public service and for stressing the importance of keeping the U.S. military free of international control. While pretending to be loyal to Beaulieu, Augustus cleverly builds a secret all-Christian American military force with which he hopes to resist, if not destroy, the Union for Peace. Based near El Refugio, Augustus’s outnumbered forces fight only one battle that ends when El Refugio’s angels intervene and turn the Antichrist’s 500,000 man army into neat little piles of ashes. But for reasons Robertson does not explain, Augustus does not send help to the Israelis in their final battle against the Antichrist.

The most important function of the Augustus character in this novel comes through his meeting with “the prophet Pastor Jack” at El Refugio. “Al Augustus and John Edwards,” writes Robertson, “were immediately drawn to each other through mutual respect. In a sense, they were both men of war, although their means and methods were different.”⁶² Augustus tells Edwards, “Together we’re a military and spiritual rallying point. The very fact of our existence can offer

⁵⁸.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 136.

⁵⁹.. See Gary Cohen, On God’s Green Earth, *U.S. News & World Report*, April 24, 1995: 31.

⁶⁰.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 325.

⁶¹.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 280.

⁶².. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 342.

hope to people all over the world.”⁶³ As the visit ends, the two men pray together and Edwards asks God “Send the Angels, dear Father, to fight for him. Give us victory over the evil one.”⁶⁴ The two men look into each other’s eyes and embrace “as if they had been friends for years.”⁶⁵ Augustus leaves and within a few pages the climactic events of Robertson’s story, and history itself, play out.

The meaning of this encounter is hardly subtle. As the military leader of legitimate resistance to an illegitimate regime, Augustus is the defender of American constitution. Bearing the name of the Roman Emperor Augustus *Caesar*, Augustus is the American State. As the spiritual leader of the Christian Resistance to Satan, Edwards is the defender of America’s covenant with God. Bearing the name of the leader of the Great Awakening, Edwards is the American Church. When Augustus and Edwards embrace, Caesar and Christ, State and Church have come together in a common purpose. It is worth noting, however, that State and Church remain distinct with different “means and methods,” just as Augustus and Edwards remain distinct characters. Rather than creating one character with both military and spiritual authority, a theocratic unity that can only be exercised by Christ Himself, Robertson points to harmony between State and Church as the ideal to which we should aspire, not once the Tribulation has begun, but here and now in the struggle against evil.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

The End of the Age, I believe, provides us with a useful map of Robertson’s mind, his view of the world and expectations of the future. It must be remembered, however, that four very eventful years have passed since Robertson’s novel appeared. In 1995, Robertson’s most visible project of the decade, the Christian Coalition, was at the height of its influence.⁶⁶ And the Coalition’s Republican allies held substantial majorities in both houses of Congress. With such successes, it may have seemed to Robertson that he could begin taking what he described as “an elder statesman’s role.”⁶⁷ But Robertson, unlike the fictional John Edwards, did not retire and move to the mountains. Instead he continued hosting *The 700 Club*. He also established WorldReach, an international evangelism ministry utilizing communications technology with the goal of bringing 500 million people to Christ by the year 2000.⁶⁸ Robertson clearly hopes this will be a fulfillment of Matthew 24:14, “This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

Just as Robertson’s novel was hitting the bookstores in November 1995, however, the tide began to turn against the so-called Republican revolution with the budget impasse and the resulting “government shutdowns.” What followed was a string of political defeats in the 1996 and 1998 elections, and in the 1999 Senate impeachment trial of President Clinton. The Christian Coalition, like its allies in the Republican party, also suffered reverses. In July 1996, the Federal Election Commission filed a still-unresolved lawsuit against the Coalition. The following year, Ralph Reed, the Coalition’s Executive Director and organizing genius, resigned to become a political consultant. After two years of financial difficulties and changes in leadership, in June

⁶³.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 343.

⁶⁴.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 345.

⁶⁵.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 345.

⁶⁶.. See Watson, *The Christian Coalition*, 51-87.

⁶⁷.. Robertson quoted in Jeffery Birnbaum, The Gospel According to Ralph, *Time*, May 15, 1995: 33.

⁶⁸.. Major Global Evangelism Initiative Begins at CBN, Christian Broadcasting Network news release, October 2, 1995. For more information on WorldReach see www.the700club.org and www.cbnworldreach.org.

1999 the Coalition announced that the Internal Revenue Service had rejected the Coalition's ten year-old application for tax-exempt status. As of this writing, the Coalition is in the midst of a fundamental reorganization. Foregoing the "elder statesman" role he seemed to be taking, Robertson has assumed direct management of the Coalition's finances and activities.⁶⁹

There is nothing, however, in Robertson's response to these setbacks that indicates that his essential views and commitments have shifted. Because he understands the conflict between the servants of God and the servants of Satan as the basic dynamic of human history, Robertson's worldview is confirmed rather than disconfirmed by the victories of his enemies. Bad news is also good news because it may be a sign of the end. It is easy to forget that Robertson, who has devoted so much time and effort to politics, does not believe any human institution can really save us from the evil and evildoers of this world. As *The End of the Age* clearly shows, he expects all such institutions, especially America's political institutions, to quickly become unresisting tools in the hands of Satan. Indeed, the office Robertson once aspired to, the presidency of the U.S., comes to be held by the Antichrist himself. Resistance comes not from institutions but from individuals who have been touched and guided by God's grace. But that resistance is insufficient to overcome Satanic domination of the world. It is only the direct exercise of God's power that brings the final victory over evil and the millennial "reign of Jesus Christ and His saints."

Evaluations of Robertson's political goals, motives, and methods need to take into account his final lack of faith in human institutions and cultural achievement. Such evaluations also need to understand what *The End of the Age* reveals about Robertson's view of his assorted critics, opponents, and enemies. Given Robertson's essential moral dualism, it should come as no surprise that he regards them as evil, as standing on the other side of an unbridgeable chasm that lies between those who have chosen to serve God and those who have not, and therefore, by default, serve the enemy of God, Satan. Such dualism lends itself, of course, to denying any connection or sympathy with those on the other side, and thus happily accepting the destruction of the "other." As the novelist D.H. Lawrence observed in his examination of the Book of Revelation, "John the Divine had, on the face of it, a grandiose scheme for wiping out and annihilating everybody who wasn't of the elect, the chosen people, in short, and climbing up himself right on the throne of God."⁷⁰

This is nicely illustrated by a final encounter between the martyred-for-Christ James Wong and Joyce, his wife, the consort of the Antichrist, his murderer. They pass as she is being dragged to off to hell and he is ascending to heaven. He is "powerful ... youthful ... remarkably handsome" while she is "a frightening old hag covered with sores." She pleads for help but he tells her, "I offered you a better way, but you cursed me. You've made your choice, and I have no power to change it. Good-bye forever, Joyce." Then, instantly, Joyce Cumberland Wong is "in a lake of fire with the devil and the Antichrist ... forever!"⁷¹ And so it is not hard to imagine that Robertson looks forward to that day upon which all his old enemies desperately beg him for help and he can say to them, "I offered you a better way, but you cursed me. Good-bye forever." Far more than any temporal political victory over his adversaries, or even the prospect of their eternal torment, perhaps that is how Pat will finally get even. He gets the last word.

⁶⁹.. David E. Rosenbaum, "Tax-Exempt Status Rejected, Christian Coalition Regroups," *New York Times*, June 11, 1999: A20.

⁷⁰.. D.H. Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, ed. Mara Kalnins (New York: Viking Press, 1982), 6.

⁷¹.. Robertson, *The End of the Age*, 369.