



Hal Lindsey

Author: Tristan Sturm

Author: Tom Albrecht

Published: 11th November 2021

Tristan Sturm and Tom Albrecht. 2021. "Hal Lindsey." In James Crossley and Alastair Lockhart (eds.) *Critical Dictionary of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements*. 11 November 2021. Retrieved from www.cdamm.org/articles/hal-lindsey

Introduction

The American evangelist Hal Lindsey (b. 1929), colloquially referred to as the father of modern prophecy, is the author of twenty-five books and host of a long running TV series called *The Hal Lindsey Report*. The most influential work of his prolonged career is his book *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970) which sold over 28 million copies (Melling 1999, 77) and according to the *New York Times* was the 'number one non-fiction best-seller of the decade' (Harding 1994, 33). Bart Ehrman went so far as to state that Lindsey is 'probably the single most read author of religion in modern times' (1999, 7). His key success, as Kirsch observes, was 'leveraging the apocalyptic idea out of the fundamentalist churches and into the mainstream of American civilization' (2006, 225). Still, Lindsey owes parts of his accomplishments to his ghost-writers and assistants. *The Late Great Planet Earth* (henceforth *Late Great*), among six other books that credit Hal Lindsey as author, were ghost-written by Carole C. Carlson (b. 1925).

Initially published by Zondervan in 1970, then a small theological press, *Late Great* was reissued by the non-religious publisher Bantam Books in 1973. In 1976, the book was made into a film narrated by Orson Wells that appeared in theatres across the United States of America. The book chronicles a near future apocalyptic vision of wars to come and Christ's imminent return to earth by reinterpreting the prophetic books of the Bible such as Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation to make sense of the present. Framing American anxieties in relation to the counterculture movement of the 1960s and the Cold War (1947-1989), the Vietnam War (1955-1975), and the Six-Day War (1967) as signs of the End Times, the book sought to give answers to the uncertainties of the time. In so doing, *Late Great* provided a template for many other evangelical prophecy authors like Tim LaHaye and John Walvoord and was thus the foundation for a billion-dollar apocalyptic prophecy writing industry in the United States. Lindsey capitalised on the success of *Late Great* via talking tours, publishing other books, and his TV programme *The Hal Lindsey Report*. *Late Great* remained the leading text in popular evangelical eschatology of world affairs until it was dethroned by his 'imitator,' Tim LaHaye, with the publication and success of his *Left Behind* fiction series of the 1990s co-written with Jerry Jenkins (Hill 2002, 1).

In this entry we will first give a short biographical account of Hal Lindsey, including his education, social and political influences, and development of his eschatological thought. In the section following, we give

some detail on Lindsey's beliefs, specifically premillennial dispensationalism. The next sections cover four of his major books which map the evolution of his thinking: *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970), *The 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon* (1980), *The Everlasting Hatred* (2002), and *The Road to Holocaust* (1989). The last section before concluding deals with one of Lindsey's most recent intellectual interests, that of climate change, via an engagement with an episode of his TV Show, *The Hal Lindsey Report*.

Hal Lindsey: A Short Biography of Influence

Born in Houston in 1929 as Harold Lindsey, Hal Lindsey studied Business at the University of Houston, served as a Coast Guard during the Korean War, and was later the captain of a tugboat in Mississippi and New Orleans in the 1950s. It was here, at twenty-six, where he found God. But it was his enrolment at the Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) in 1958 that led to the development of his apocalyptic predictions about the shape of world politics, the centrality of Israel in God's plan for world affairs, and the role within this tribulation of 'true believing Christians.' DTS at the time, and arguably today, is the centre of Calvinistic premillennial dispensationalist thought (Spector 2004, 48). John Walvoord (1910-2002), a faculty member at DTS, had the greatest influence on Lindsey at the time, when DTS was restructuring its faculty and offerings toward premillennial dispensationalist theology that today remains the theological focus of teaching there (Hannah 2009, 159-61).

After graduating from DTS, Lindsey found his footing by spreading DTS theology as the director of the *Campus Crusade for Christ* UCLA chapter and as a soap box preacher throughout California. It was on his campus tours that Lindsey would experiment and cohere his ideas among the quickly shifting cultural movements in Los Angeles and San Francisco, by using a 'pseudo-hip writing style to target baby boomers on the edge of the counterculture' (McAlister 2005, 294). In 1968, *Campus Crusade* sponsored a regional conference on the End Times in the Grand Ballroom of the student union at UCLA, the 'same stage on which Timothy Leary had promoted the use of LSD and Angela Davis had preached Marxist revolution' (Weber 2004, 188). Lindsey spoke all five nights at the conference, reportedly 'drawing larger crowds each night' (Weber 2004, 188). The positive response to his campus sermons inspired Lindsey to write *Late Great*, reinterpreting the biblical books of Revelation, Daniel, and Ezekiel within the present cultural and political milieu, giving old Bible texts a renewed meaning to the present for his contemporary readers. Shortly after the publication of *Late Great*, Lindsey opened 'a communal ministry in an old three-story frat house close to the UCLA campus' called 'The Jesus Christ Light and Power Company' from which he could 'expound the prophetic expectations he outlined in *The Late Great Planet Earth*' (Gribben 2021, 38).

His followers and readers were those alienated by the counterculture movement, but also those post-New Agers or 'Christian hippies' among the Jesus People Movement looking for a simplified, yet spiritual and specifically Christian explanation for geopolitical and cultural changes (Eskridge 2013; Gribben 2021, 40). Lindsey was a culture warrior set against movements in astrology, mysticism, witchcraft, and what he calls 'oriental religions' (Lindsey 1970, 174). Instead, Lindsey was guiding his readers to see cultural, sexual, gender, racial minority groups as aligned with Satan as is common among fundamentalist evangelical authors (O'Donnell 2021). Lindsey called his target audience the 'searching generation' who were looking for 'answers to the large problems of the world' (Lindsey 1970, epilogue). Geopolitically and nationally, Lindsey spoke to the pessimistic zeitgeist of the Vietnam War, the Cold War arms race, the oil crisis, and Watergate. *Late Great* promised exigency, meaning, and a reassertion of American providential destiny

and that a Christian elect would be spared the horrors of nuclear war during Armageddon. Somewhat ironically in the light of Lindsey's rejection of other spiritual movements, *Late Great* was marketed alongside growing New Age, esoteric, and eastern religious literatures and was commonly found at grocery store tills (Harding 1994, 33–34). But Lindsey's influence exceeded the cultural realm as *Late Great* 'set a pattern for the shape of the political re-engagement of American evangelicals in the final third of the twentieth century' (Gribben 2011, 111), including influencing believing political elites of the United States.

Still riding the success of *Late Great* and well received follow-up books like *Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth* (1972), *There is a New World Coming* (1973), and *The 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon* (1980), Lindsey was invited to speak at the Pentagon by President Reagan in 1981 concerning his vision for the Middle East and specifically the future shape of the Cold War (Halsell 1986, 47). Lindsey would also, reportedly, consult with the American Air War College (Weber 2004, 197). About his speech and visit to the Pentagon, Lindsey later wrote 'it seems that a number of officers and non-military personnel alike has read *Late Great* and wanted to hear more' (Lindsey 1980, 6). Reagan, as Governor of California in the 1970s, had been fascinated with Lindsey's *Late Great*. While Reagan's religiosity is disputed, it is well documented that Reagan had an interest in prophecy and apocalyptic thought. Likely the leading academic text on Hal Lindsey is Stephen O'Leary's *Arguing the Apocalypse* (1994), which asserts that 'every one of Lindsey's proposals for domestic and foreign policy was part of Reagan's campaign platform' (1994, 177). Reagan's official biographer, Edmund Morris, wrote that Ezekiel—a key apocalyptic text among premillennial dispensationalists—was Reagan's 'favourite book of prophecy' (Morris 1999, 632–33), though the 'semi-fictional' nature of the biography complicates the accuracy of such a claim. However, Reagan was quoted by the *Washington Post*:

In the thirty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel it says God will take the children of Israel from among the heathen [where] they'd been scattered and will gather them again in the promised land. Ezekiel says that... the nation that will lead all the other powers into darkness against Israel will come out of the north. What other powerful nation is to the north of Israel [besides Russia]? None. But it didn't seem to make sense before the Russian revolution, when Russia was a Christian country. Now it does, now that Russia has become communistic and atheistic, now that Russia has set itself against God. Now it fits the description perfectly. (Vidal 1993, 1001–2.)

In an interview with *Christian Life* magazine in 1968, Reagan as Governor of California said, 'never in history have so many of the prophecies come true in such a relatively short time' (Boyer 1994, 142). Reagan later told the evangelist Jim Bakker in 1980 that 'we may be the generation that sees Armageddon' (Halsell 1986, 47). Furthering this point, Reagan also appointed evangelicals who aligned themselves with premillennial dispensationalism to influential political positions including Attorney General Edwin Meese, Secretary of the Interior James Watt, and Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, who is quoted as saying, 'Yes, I believe the world is going to end—by an act of God, I hope—but every day I think time is running out' (Halsell 1986, 48). Reagan, as an anti-communist crusader, was likely part of Lindsey's 'searching generation' and *Late Great* may have led him to believe in a metaphysical understanding of the USSR as an 'evil empire.' Weber asks of Lindsey's potential influence on American political leaders, 'did such people adjust their military plans to bring them in line with dispensationalism? There is no evidence that they did so, but one cannot help but marvel at the fact that Lindsey got access to them' (Weber 2004, 197). Giving more geopolitical clout to *Late Great's* vision, the 1976 film that shares its name and

inspiration inserts in documentary-style Orson Wells' narrative with interviews from international relations experts like Nobel Prize winners George Wald and Norman Borlaug, the director of the Club of Rome Aurelio Peccei, and the biologist and populist neo-Malthusian Paul Ehrlich. The documentary-style combined with expert voices gave the film and Lindsey's ideas further clout and realism for the viewer.

Eschatology: Premillennial Dispensationalism

Late Great, and all subsequent work, is a rewriting of the doctrine of dispensational premillennialism—a theological interpretation Lindsey would have learned at DTS—first cohered by John Nelson Darby in the nineteenth century. Indeed, some DTS colleagues complained that *Late Great* was the result of 'repackaged... lecture notes' (Boyer 1994, 126).

Premillennialism is an evangelical eschatological belief where Christ returns 'pre'-vious to the 'millennium' (Christ's thousand-year rule on earth). As a pessimist disposition, premillennialists believe that the world is in social, moral, economic, and political decay, and that the world can only be saved by Christ's intervention in world affairs (Sweetnam 2011). In contrast, postmillennialism, a less popular theology among evangelicals, is more optimistic of domestic and world affairs and has Christ return after Christians make their own millennium on earth. Dispensationalism is a variety of premillennialism that posits a break between the church and Israel along differentiated historical periods in which God deals with humanity differently. The current—and penultimate—age for dispensationalists is called the 'church age.' The main import from dispensationalism into Lindsey's thought, however, is the concept of a 'secret Rapture' and a seven-year Tribulation preceding Christ's return (see Dittmer and Sturm 2016). Emerging in the 1830s, dispensationalism became widely accepted in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century and is now largely synonymous with evangelical premillennialism.

Gribben (2021, 152) calls Lindsey's premillennialism a 'historicist' interpretive approach. Modernising and historicising premillennial dispensationalism, *Late Great* recounts a future set of events, a seven-year 'Tribulation period' that begins with the rebuilding of the Third Temple upon the Haram esh-Sharif or Temple Mount where the Dome of the Rock now sits in Jerusalem. This will be followed by the Antichrist's global dictatorial rule. Three and a half years into this period, all 'true believing' Christians will be lifted from earth into heaven in an event called the Rapture, sparing them the battle of Armageddon that will take place in the Jezreel Valley in modern Israel. Jesus will then return, ending this battle, vanquishing his enemies, judging those who remain, and ruling the earth for one thousand years. After this millennium, Satan will be defeated absolutely, and will ultimately reward those true believers with eternal life and a new heaven and earth. To avoid death and destruction, one's only hope was conversion to Christianity before Christ returns.

The Late Great Planet Earth: Cold War Geopolitics

Late Great popularised the Apocalypse, Christian prophecy, and the term 'Rapture' as key themes in evangelical culture (Wojcik 1997, 37). As a 'pop-dispensational block-buster' (Gribben 2011, 111), the book's influence extended into American popular and political culture, 'informing American geo-political debates' (Casanova 2001, 416). In an attempt to make sense of the nuclear age, Lindsey was set apart

from many of his contemporary prophecy writers because he adeptly, and polemically, brought together political world affairs and biblical prophecy. By popularising this linkage, Lindsey helped bring evangelicals into the public sphere from their concerns with familial and church matters.

In his comprehensive book *On the Road to Armageddon* (2004), Timothy Weber writes of the unique import of *Late Great*: 'What made Lindsey's book different were the times in which it was published. Earlier authors could only point to future fulfilments, but Lindsey claimed that the puzzle pieces of prophecy were already falling into place for all to see' (Weber 2004, 189). Those puzzle pieces were the geopolitical shape of the world. As Lindsey put it, perhaps parroting Zbigniew Brzezinski's popular geopolitical puzzle metaphor at the time, Israel 'is like the key piece of a jigsaw puzzle being found and then having the many adjacent pieces rapidly fall into place' (Lindsey 1970, 58). Kirsch, furthering Weber's analysis, makes the geopolitical intervention of *Late Great* more explicit: 'What distinguishes Lindsey from doomsayers with more modest book sales is his undeniable genius for hot-wiring the book of Revelation to the geopolitical realities of the contemporary world,' specifically a world 'haunted by realpolitik of the Cold War and the constant threat of nuclear annihilation' (Kirsch 2006, 223).

Lindsey's dispensationalist lens reinterprets the geopolitical landscape of the 1960s, renaming biblical spaces like 'Rosh' as 'Russian,' and biblical characters with names of modern resonance. For example, the Antichrist is 'the Future Fuehrer,' the Whore of Babylon is 'Scarlet O'Harlot,' and Armageddon is 'World War III.' While Lindsey devotes the first three chapters of his book to arguing for the infallibility of the Bible, the remaining eleven chapters link prophecy with current events. They are about the geopolitics of prophecy.

The central protagonist to the prophetic geopolitical story of *Late Great* is Israel. In his book, Lindsey continues the work from previous premillennial interpreters of geopolitics which ascribed high eschatological significance to developments in the Holy Land. During World War I (1914-1918), American dispensationalists argued, for instance, that prophecies are near fulfilment as they saw battles in the Middle East as indicating the battle of Armageddon. Moreover, evangelical prophecy interpreters claimed that the British defeat of the Ottoman Empire and especially the Balfour Declaration of 1917 (a statement by the British government in which it expressed its support for the Zionist desire of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine) were fulfilling biblical prophecies (Gribben 2011; Sutton 2016). 'The times of the Gentiles, the great parentheses in the dispensational scheme, seemed near completion' (Sutton 2016, 73) as the Balfour Declaration was largely understood as a fulfilment of Jeremiah 29:14: 'I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive' (KJV).

In *Late Great* and common among premillennial dispensationalist thought, the prophetic biblical clock begins in the 1948 founding of the modern state of Israel, the day 'the prophetic countdown began!' (Lindsey 1970, 57). Lindsey states with apocalyptic zeal:

With the Jewish nation reborn in the land of Palestine, ancient Jerusalem once again under total Jewish control for the first time in 2600 years, and talk of rebuilding the great Temple, the most important sign of Jesus Christ's soon coming is before us... For all those who trust in Jesus Christ, it is a time of electrifying excitement. (Lindsey 1970, 57-58.)

So central is this event to Lindsey that, assuming a biblical generation is forty years, Lindsey implied the Rapture and the end of the world will happen in or before 1988: 'This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled,' wrote Lindsey. 'What generation?... the generation that would see the signs—chief among them the rebirth of Israel. A generation in the Bible is something like forty years. If this is a correct deduction, then within forty years or so of 1948, all these things could take place' (Lindsey 1970, 53). Concerning this passage, O'Leary (1994, 210) writes that Lindsey side-stepped the 'perils of predictive specificity by an artful use of strategic ambiguity.' For Lindsey, the 1967 Six-Day War and the seizure of Gaza, the West Bank, and Jerusalem, affirmed to him that God had set in motion an apocalyptic timeline.

The central antagonist of Lindsey's story is the USSR. The Russian Revolution (1917) 'provided evangelicals with the apocalyptic enemy they expected of a northern Eurasian Gog and Magog which would offer prophetically inclined observers of current affairs a bogeyman whose legacy would continue until the end of the twentieth century' (Gribben 2011, 103). This historical precedent among premillennialists, along with the development of the Cold War, the rise of the USSR, and the US/USSR arms race, are all projected by Lindsey into the future to envision a major 'Russian' advancement into Israel which will spark the final battle of Armageddon which is graphically depicted with two maps in the centre of the book (Sturm 2021). For the USSR—what Lindsey often calls 'Russia' because, as stated above, he equates it to the biblical 'Rosh' in Ezekiel 39:1—Lindsey imagined a complex battle plan where his Russian Confederate Army lead Chinese, American, and African military forces to invade Israel which coalesces into the Battle of Armageddon. Just like his predecessors during World War I, Lindsey believed that contemporary geopolitical developments would climax in the Battle of Armageddon at the Holy Land.

With a newspaper in one hand and the Bible in another, Lindsey depicts the military preparations for the battle of Armageddon, beginning three and a half years before the final battle of Armageddon with the building of the Third Temple, where the Dome of the Rock now sits. He explains to his readers that an Arab-African confederacy called the 'Kings of the South' will invade Israel/Palestine followed by the Russian army and navy, which together capture Israel/Palestine and finally settles in Egypt. Flanking from the West, the 'Kings of the West' led by the Antichrist (which are the 'Caucasian race' made up of the European Economic Community [EEC] or 'Roman Empire' of Daniel 9:26) advance on Israel/Palestine. This 'Roman Confederacy,' along with 200 million soldiers from the 'Kings of the East,' what Lindsey calls the 'Asian hordes,' surround the USSR as it retreats back to Israel/Palestine. In this final battle, the USSR is defeated by the Antichrist's armies through a thermal-nuclear exchange that kills one-third of the world's population. Just as the battle of Armageddon reaches its crescendo, Christ appears, vanquishes the unbelievers, halts further hostilities, and protects the remaining believers in Christ.

While Lindsey went on to write twenty-four more books after *Late Great*, most are minor amendments to this central geopolitical narrative. Indeed, there is considerable overlap of material throughout the books produced between 1970 and 1990. Below we focus on three other books that chart significant shifts in Lindsey's thinking: *The 1980s* (1980), *The Everlasting Hatred* (2002), and *The Road to Holocaust* (1989).

The 1980s and The Everlasting Hatred

The major follow-up to *Late Great* was Lindsey's book, *The 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon* (1980).

While largely an update to *Late Great*, many geopolitical events confirmed his analysis in the prophetic direction of geopolitics, including the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, the Yom Kippur War, OPEC's squeeze on oil production, the Iranian Revolution, and the European common market accepting a tenth state. Challenging his narrative was the Camp David Accords which promised to bring peace between Israel and Egypt. Lindsey predicted, however, that Sadat would be assassinated because 'Khomeini has promised "special blessings of Allah" for the person who executes Anwar Sadat,' and a year later that is precisely what happened (Lindsey 1980, 61). Unlike *Late Great* which foretold American cultural, geopolitical, and economic decline as a necessity for Christ's return, in *The 1980s*, Lindsey gives agency to the US state and the American people to remain a world power by expanding the American military. He writes: 'I believe that the Bible supports building a powerful military force. And the Bible is telling the US to become strong again. A weak military will encourage the Soviet Union to start an all-out war' (Lindsey 1980, 165). More concerned with, and motivated by, domestic USA politics than in his previous books, Lindsey also encourages his readers to vote Republican in order to oust leaders (i.e., President Carter) who engage in diplomatic relations or who are seen to restrict free enterprise capitalism.

In addition to the emphasis on American politics, we see also in this book more focus on the Middle East and a somewhat revised focus on the USSR. Lindsey would go even further in his revisionary prophetic geopolitics in his book, *Planet Earth 2000 A.D.* (1994). Here, Lindsey argues that Islam is becoming the ultimate enemy of Christ but added that 'the "collapse" of Communism is part of a masterful game of deceit engineered by Mikhail Gorbachev and Soviet KGB' (quoted in Ehrman 1999, 10). However, it is his post-9/11 book *The Everlasting Hatred* (2002) where Lindsey would largely drop the conspiratorial tone and follow the direction of other, younger, prophecy writers like Mark Hitchcock by inserting a central role for Iraq and Iran (Sturm 2006). In Lindsey's own words, 'when I wrote *The Late Great Planet Earth* in 1969, the Muslim nations were nothing like the threat they are now' (Lindsey 2002, 231). Lindsey, a Cold Warrior, refuses to fully relinquish Russia's role after the fall of the Soviet Union. Lindsey, attempting to make sense of Ezekiel 38, writes, 'The northern commander Russian (who can only be Russian since they are the only nation to Israel's extreme north) will lead a confederacy of people who are all today Muslim. Chief among those named is Persia, or modern Iran' (Lindsey 2002, 33). The focus of the book, however, is an attempt to naturalise Arabs as inherently violent ('violence has been a continual fact of life for the Arabs'[Lindsey 2002, 33]) and presents Islam as a religion of terrorism by couching it in a cursory and selective reading of the Quran and history. Lindsey writes, 'hatred of Jews in Islam is justified as a religious cause. Islam literally resurrected the ancient enmities and jealousies of the sons of Ishmael, Esau and Keturah toward Jews and enshrined them in religious doctrine' (Lindsey 2002, 90). Rather ahistorically and unself-reflectively of his own previous work, Lindsey concludes this is 'a hatred that has lasted 4000 years' (Lindsey 2002, 90, 127). Despite a literal and certain interpretation of biblical geopolitics in his earlier work, such geopolitical 'signs' change freely for Lindsey without recourse or concerted criticism within evangelical communities with the noted exception of postmillennialist Reconstructionists—a point which we will develop below. There is thus an amnesia permitting Lindsey to have it both ways: both certain and protean prophecy (Sturm 2016).

The Road to Holocaust

Lindsey's critical pen did not stop at the USSR or Islam, however. He also took aim at postmillennialist Christian Reconstructionists in his 1989 book, *The Road to Holocaust*. While Lindsey had hinted at his

disdain for postmillennialism in *Late Great*, writing that it was 'wiped out' by WWI, he concluded 'no self-respecting scholar who looks at world conditions and the accelerating decline of Christian influence' (Lindsey 1970, 176) could believe in postmillennialism. But his own institution, the Jesus Christ Light and Power Company in Westwood, California, would itself be taken over by these 'wiped out' postmillennialist by way of R. J. Rushdoony 'who by the early 1970s had cultivated sufficient links among religious and political conservatives to warrant his reputation as an emerging culture warrior of note' (Gribben 2021, 40). Despite the strength of pessimistic premillennialist movements which denied that social and political action was possible, Rushdoony advocated for Christian mobilisation to fight against his perceived societal ills in his book, *Thy Kingdom Come: Studies in Daniel and Revelation* (1971).

Rushdoony and his son-in-law Gary North, who was Lindsey's lead critic in the evangelical community, wrote several books and are credited with significantly resuscitating evangelical political mobilisation in the public sphere. Indeed, via Judge Roy Moore, their biblical blueprint for government was witnessed by a 2005 bill titled the Constitution Restoration Act, and was co-sponsored by sixty congress-people, which in Moore's words would force 'the constitution of every state of the Union [to] acknowledge God and His sovereignty... [as well as the] three branches of the federal government' (Moore 2004). They argue that Christians must establish Mosaic judicial and penal codes (Pentateuch) prior to the return of Christ. In other words, they need to involve themselves in politics. Lindsey referred to North's books as having a 'Rambo-like literary style' (1989, 32) and cautioned his dispensationalist readers not to follow Rushdoony and North's postmillennialist eschatology, saying that 'the Reconstructionist error in eschatology (the doctrine of last things or prophecy) to outright anti-Semitism was only a matter of time' (1989, 9). Lindsey concludes the book by asking his readers to 'let the true Christian *never again* give a theological framework from which unscrupulous men can promote another holocaust for the children of Israel' (1989, 283). Gary North, in his forward to Gary DeMar's 1989 book (with Peter J. Leithart), *The Legacy of Hate Continues*, hits back at Lindsey's comparison of Reconstructionism to the Nazis by writing: '*The Road to Holocaust* can accurately be described as chloroform in print. I was its target and yet it nearly put me to sleep. (Please, whatever you do, don't smoke in bed while reading this book!). It is not just that he got the facts wrong... it is that Hal Lindsey without C.C. Carlson to ghost write his material is boring! The man just can't write' (DeMar 1989, ix). There is debate as to the role and content Carlson had into *Late Great*. Not only did Carlson ghost write six of Lindsey's books, she also ghost wrote a further sixteen other prophecy books for well-known evangelical men. As one online commentor wrote of Carlson's impact on the apocalypse prophecy publishing industry, 'if Hal Lindsey is the father [of modern prophecy], is she not the mother of modern prophecy?' (Constant Contact, n.d.).

Consistent with this doctrine of God's predestined and therefore unalterable Covenants with Jews, Christians, and the earth that is counter to the agency granted to Reconstructionists, Lindsey would later cast his eyes on the politically significant geopolitical issue of climate change on his TV show, *The Hal Lindsey Report*.

The Hal Lindsey Report and a Shift to Climate Apocalypse

In 1994, Lindsey launched a TV programme called *International Intelligence Briefing*, carried by Trinity Broadcasting Network. The programme was dropped from the network (in Lindsey's [2005] words for being 'too pro-Israel and too anti-Muslim') and later became *The Hal Lindsey Report*, shown on Christian media

channels Angel One and DayStar. Following the American religious practice of employing contemporary popular media to distribute evangelical messages, *The Hal Lindsey Report* is also available online on Lindsey's website hallindsey.com. The programme carried the tagline 'Yesterday's prophecies. Today's headlines,' which is indicative of Lindsey's continued interest in explaining current affairs through a premillennialist frame (Boyer 1994; Stunt 2012). In his weekly show, Lindsey offers 'his theological reading of world events' (Miller 2014, 13) which among other issues also includes the climate crisis, the geopolitics of climate change, and environmentalism.

To illustrate Lindsey's framing of climate change, we look at one episode which aired on 27 February 2015. In that episode, Lindsey states that he is not going to discuss the prophetic significance of climate change or global warming itself, but how the 'hype and fear' (00:51-00:52) about the theory of global warming 'may turn out to be one of the key stories in the End Times prophetic scenario' (00:42-00:48). In short, Lindsey states that climate change is a deception which is used to establish the Antichrist's global reign and his system of control under the pretext of climate and environmental protection.

In an attempt to delegitimise scientific institutions and methods, Lindsey says that 'this story [climate change] is not about science. It is about politics and propaganda' (02:23-02:27) and claims additionally, that the 'IPCC ... has been caught fudging figures on more than one occasion' (03:41-03:48). Lindsey also asks his audience, as he did in his critique of Reconstructionism, if they are going to 'believe in the flawed theories of man, which are motivated by all kinds of his own interests, or in the clear covenant of God, who says, as long as this earth remains, there will be no man-made climate change' (15:36-15:56). Lindsey does so to draw attention to biblical authority, which should govern an evangelical's understanding of the world.

What becomes apparent here is that Lindsey justifies his rejection of anthropogenic climate change through biblical infallibility, or, more precisely, through his interpretation of Genesis. Lindsey claims that in Genesis 8:21, God promised 'never to destroy the present earth because of man's sinfulness' (12:32-12:36) and argues based on that divine covenant that the earth's climate system cannot change because of human activities. However, Lindsey expresses not only his disbelief in anthropogenic climate change, but he argues against the existence of climate change and global warming in general. He says that the climate cannot change because 'cold and heat, winter and summer, day and night' (Genesis 8:22) will remain as long as the earth will exist. On his TV show, Lindsey lists additional alleged scientific and biblical evidence against climate change before he focuses on what is known to be his area of expertise: the geopolitics of prophecy.

Following a popular trend within American premillennialism which expects that the Antichrist comes into global power through the United Nations (UN), Lindsey claims that the UN and the IPCC assist the Antichrist in establishing his global reign under the guise of global environmental protection policies. In that context, Lindsey (16:56-17:19) firmly argues that the theory of climate change is an intentionally designed tool of power of the Antichrist: 'Put your trust into God's word, not in the self-serving false declarations of those who want to use this manufactured deception to bring people and nations under the control of just a very few. This will ultimately be used to help bring the Antichrist into power!' Addressing the 2015 UN's Climate Change Conference in Paris (COP21), Lindsey claims that the UN so far 'has no teeth' (21:24-21:26) and, therefore, no power, but also that the institution's leaders 'would love to change that' (21:27-21:29) with promoting global climate protection policies. According to Lindsey, increased global governance is the overarching goal of the alleged Antichrist's deception as he claims that the

'ultimate goal of all that hype that is already surrounding this conference [COP21]' is 'fear and control' (23:33-23:41). Due to climate change, the UN gains prophetic significance in Lindsey's dispensational imagination of the End Times which, as outlined above, so far mostly emphasised Russia, Israel, the Middle East, and the EEC/EU.

Furthermore, Lindsey prophesies that 'soon, they [environmentalists] will begin to imprison and execute Christians who believe God's word on this issue' (24:35-24:42). Here, Lindsey draws from the premillennialist fear of imprisonment of Christians which McAlister (2005) and Dittmer and Spears (2009) identify in the fictional *Left Behind* novels. Still, it is not just the fear of imprisonment where Lindsey draws from *Left Behind*, but also his geopolitical imagination which correlates the rise of the Antichrist to the UN's global extent of power, specifically the IPCC. While this correlation was popularised in the 1990s, most notably by Tim LaHaye's *Left Behind* novels, it was also shared by televangelist Pat Robertson and populist preacher [John Hagee](#) (Durbin 2018). After the *Late Great* author paved the way for the American apocalyptic geopolitical tradition, Lindsey now draws from the geopolitical imaginations of his successors in his assessment of climate change.

The modern, post-Cold War, American premillennial geopolitical imagination often includes conspiracist arguments which are also identifiable in Lindsey's perception of climate change. While not 'all sceptics advance conspiracy theories' (Douglas and Sutton 2015, 99), Lindsey's allegations of the IPCC faking findings as well as the claim that climate change is 'Satan's lie that he is using to take control of the world' (25:32-25:39) qualifies Lindsey's discourse as a conspiracist premillennialist climate change discourse. Lindsey's apocalyptic, geopolitical and, sometimes, conspiracist perception of climate change adds some complexity to Curry-Roper's (1990), Hulme's (2009), and Sutton's (2016) observations which argue that premillennialists tend to classify the physical indicators of climate change, environmental degradation, and environmental disasters as signs of the End Times. Countering many evangelical interlocutors, Lindsey argues that global warming itself is not a sign of the End Times: 'Is global warming a biblical sign of the End Times? No' (20:36-20:40).

This *Hal Lindsey Report* episode is representative of a logical addition to the dispensationalist geopolitical mind-set as outlined previously but adapted to incorporate a contemporary discourse like climate change and the supposed connection between the Antichrist and the UN to give himself and his prophecy an updated significance.

Conclusion

In June 2019, at the age of 89, Lindsey (2019) announced on his website that he will no longer produce TV shows on a weekly basis nor accept speaking engagements due to his age and health issues. Since mid-2019, *The Hal Lindsey Report* consists of old footage of Lindsey's sermons on Bible prophecy in front of live audiences. While there are still updates posted on his website under his name, his de facto retirement announcement marks the end of his influential career after spreading his gospel for half a century.

Late Great and Lindsey's other interventions via follow-up books, Holy Land tours, as a pastor in Los Angeles, and a TV show host, opened up the field of biblical prophecy for celebrity preachers including for his own mentor at DTS, John F. Walvoord, who sold 100,000 copies of his book *Armageddon: Oil and the*

Middle East Crisis (1974). This book was recently reissued in 2006 and updated by popular prophecy writer and DTS graduate Mark Hitchcock (Sturm 2006). After premillennial dispensationalism, Lindsey's books likely had the single largest impact on the popular fictional *Left Behind* (1995) series authored by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, whose multiple volumes outsold Lindsey's *Late Great* twice over. Both *Late Great* and *Left Behind* share the same eschatological foundation and conspiracist suspicion of international institutions like the UN, the location of evil in the EU, Russia, and the Muslim Middle East (Kilde 2004, 64).

For all of Lindsey's hard geopolitical analysis and predictions outlined above, his books, talk show, and other resources are all ultimately aimed at conversion to his form of Christianity—in other words, to save lives before the Rapture. Lindsey concludes *Late Great*: 'If you are not sure that you have personally accepted the gift of God's forgiveness which Jesus Christ purchased by bearing the judgement of a holy God that was due your sins, then you should do it right now wherever you are' (Lindsey 1970, 186). True to his form of evangelicalism, one should follow the Holy Spirit, read the Bible, evangelise, and be ready for the Rapture.

While Lindsey may not have had a direct impact on American geopolitics, or at least one that can be evidenced, he helped create the foundation for a cultural movement where apocalyptic theology became mainstream among Christian and non-Christian adherents alike. As Boyer writes, 'in these years [the 1980s] the premillennial eschatology that has saturated grassroots religious culture for decades converged with a larger rightward thrust in American life in a synergistic process that ... transformed the political landscape' (Boyer 1994, 150). Lindsey undoubtedly impacted and influenced the rightward and public-political march of American evangelicals which resulted in the election of George W. Bush and Donald Trump to the American presidency, though certainly his cultural impact waned by the mid-1980s. But the mainstreaming of apocalyptic thought and the seamless blending of politics and the Bible helped open a space for the public-facing Christian politics we understand and see in twenty-first century America.

References

Boyer, Paul. 1994. *When Time Shall Be No More*. Cambridge: Belknap Press.

Carr, Wylie, Michael Patterson, Laurie Yung, and Daniel Spencer. 2012. "The Faithful Sceptics: Evangelical Religious Beliefs and Perceptions of Climate Change." *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 6: 276-99.

Casanova, Jose. 2001. "Religion, the New Millennium, and Globalization." *Sociology of Religion* 62 (4): 415-41.

Constant Contact. n.d. "The Mother of Modern Prophecy: Carole C. Carlson." <http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs086/1103027403968/archive/1110927800047.html>.

Curry-Roper, Janet M. 1990. "Contemporary Christian Eschatologies and their Relation to Environmental Stewardship." *The Professional Geographer* 42 (2): 157-69.

DeMar, Gary and Peter J. Leithart. 1989. *The Legacy of Hate Continues*. Atlanta: American Vision.

- Dittmer, Jason, and Tristan Sturm, eds. 2016. *Mapping the End Times: American Evangelical Geopolitics and Apocalyptic Visions*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Dittmer, Jason, and Zeke Spears. 2009. "Apocalypse, Now? The Geopolitics of 'Left Behind.'" *GeoJournal* 74 (3): 183–89.
- Douglas, Karen M., and Robbie M. Sutton. 2015. "Climate Change: Why the Conspiracy Theories are Dangerous." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 71 (2): 98–106.
- Durbin, Sean. 2018. *Righteous Gentiles: Religion, Identity, and Myth in John Hagee's Christians United for Israel*. Leiden: Brill.
- Ehrman, Bart D. 1999. *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Eskridge, Larry. 2013. *God's Forever Family: The Jesus People Movement in America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gribben, Crawford. 2011. *Evangelical Millennialism in the Trans-Atlantic World, 1500–2000*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gribben, Crawford. 2021. *Survival and Resistance in Evangelical America: Christian Reconstruction in the Pacific Northwest*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Halsell, Grace. 1986. *Prophecy and Politics: Militant Evangelists on the Road to Nuclear War*. Westport: Lawrence Hill.
- Hannah, John. 2009. *An Uncommon Union: Dallas Theological Seminary and American Evangelicalism*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Harding, Susan. 1994. "Imagining the Last Days: The Politics of Apocalyptic Language." *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 48 (3): 14–44.
- Hill, Craig C. 2002. *In God's Times: The Bible and the Future*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Hulme, Mike. 2009. *Why We Disagree about Climate Change*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Kilde, Jeanne H. 2004. "How Did Left Behind's Particular Vision of the End Times Develop? A Historical Look at Millenarian Thought." In *Rapture, Revelation, and the End Times: Exploring the Left Behind Series*, edited by Bruce D. Forbes and Jeanne H. Kilde, 33–70. New York: Palgrave.
- Kirsch, James. 2006. *A History of the End of the World*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco.
- LaHaye, Tim, and Jerry Jenkins. 1995. *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days*. Carol Stream: Tyndale.
- Lindsey, Hal. 1970. *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

- Lindsey, Hal. 1972. *Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Lindsey, Hal. 1973. *There is a New World Coming*. Eugene: Harvest House.
- Lindsey, Hal. 1980. *The 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon*. King of Prussia: Westgate.
- Lindsey, Hal. 1989. *The Road to Holocaust*. New York: Bantam.
- Lindsey, Hal. 1994. *Planet Earth 2000 A.D.: Will Humanity Survive?* Palo Verdes: Western Front.
- Lindsey, Hal. 2002. *The Everlasting Hatred: The Roots of Jihad*. Murrieta: Oracle House.
- Lindsey, Hal. 2005. "Urgent Personal Message from Hal: TBN Suspends IIB." *Hallindseyoracle.com*. Retrieved from:
<https://web.archive.org/web/20051212131839/http://www.hallindseyoracle.com/articles.asp?ArticleID=12130>.
- Lindsey, Hal. 2015. Hal Lindsey Report. Retrieved from:
<http://www.hallindsey.com/videos/hal-lindsey-report-2272015/414/>.
- Lindsey, Hal. 2019. Special Announcement. Retrieved from:
<https://www.hallindsey.com/ww-6-10-2019/>.
- McAlister, Melani. 2005. "Prophecy, Politics, and the Popular: The Left Behind Series and Christian Evangelicalism's New World Order." In *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*, edited by Rebecca L. Stein and Todd Swedenburg, 288-312. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Melling, Philip. 1999. *Fundamentalism in America: Millennialism, Identity and Militant Religion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Miller, Steven P. 2014. *The Age of Evangelicalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Moore, Roy. 2004. "Judge Roy Moore introduces Constitution Restoration Act 2004." *WAFF News*.
<http://www.waff.com/Global/story.asp?S=1644862>.
- Morris, Edmund. 1999. *Dutch: A Memoir of Ronald Reagan*. New York: Random House.
- North, Gary. 1986. *Unholy Spirits: Occultism and New Age Humanism*. Fort Worth, TX: Dominion Press.
- O'Donnell, Jonathon. 2021. *Passing Orders: Demonology and Sovereignty in American Spiritual Warfare*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- O'Leary, Stephen. 1994. *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rushdoony, R. J. 1971. *Thy Kingdom Come: Studies in Daniel and Revelation*. Vallecito: Ross House.

- Spector, Stephen. 2004. *Christian Zionists: On the Road to Armageddon*. Colorado Springs: Presence Ministries.
- Stunt, Timothy C. F. 2012. "Trinity College, John Darby and the Powerscourt Milieu." In *Beyond the End: The Future of Millennial Studies*, edited by Joshua Searle and Kenneth G. C. Newport, 47-74. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press.
- Sturm, Tristan. 2006. "Prophetic Eyes: The Theatricality of Mark Hitchcock's Premillennial Geopolitics." *Geopolitics* 11 (2): 231-55.
- Sturm, Tristan. 2016. "Imagining Apocalyptic Geopolitics: American Evangelical Citationality of Evil Others." In *Mapping the End Times: American Evangelical Geopolitics and Apocalyptic Visions*, edited by Jason Dittmer and Tristan Sturm, 133-54. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Sturm, Tristan. 2018. "Religion as Nationalism: The Religious Nationalism for Israel of American Christian Zionists." *National Identities* 20 (3): 299-319.
- Sturm, Tristan. 2021. "Hal Lindsey's Geopolitical Future: Towards a Cartographic Theory of Anticipatory Arrows." *Journal of Maps* 17 (1): 39-45.
- Sutton, Matthew A. 2016. *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press
- Sweetnam, Mark. 2011. "Hal Lindsay and the Great Dispensational Mutation." *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 23 (2): 217-35.
- Vidal, Gore. 1993. *United States: Essays, 1952-1992*. New York: Broadway Books.
- Walvoord, John F. 1974. *Armageddon: Oil and the Middle East Crisis*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Weber, Timothy P. 2004. *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Wojcik, Daniel. 1997. *The End of the World as We Know It: Faith, Fatalism and Apocalypse in America*. New York: New York University Press.

© Tristan Sturm and Tom Albrecht 2021

Article information

Tristan Sturm and Tom Albrecht. 2021. "Hal Lindsey." In James Crossley and Alastair Lockhart (eds.) *Critical Dictionary of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements*. 11 November 2021. Retrieved from www.cdamm.org/articles/hal-lindsey

Downloaded: 2021-11-14

Provided under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0