

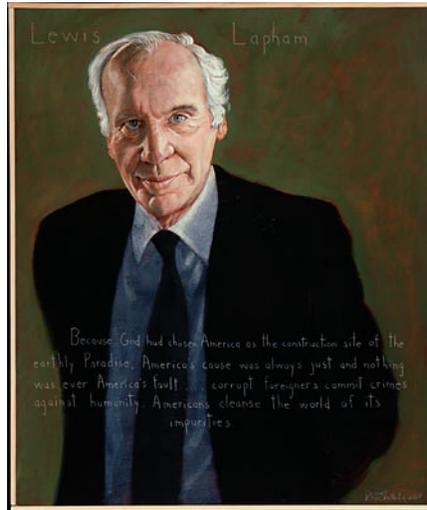
# The Wrath of the Lamb

by Lewis H. Lapham  
Harper's Magazine — May 2005

*The theologian may indulge the pleasing task of describing Religion as she descended from Heaven, arrayed in her native purity. A more melancholy duty is imposed on the historian. He must discover the inevitable mixture of error and corruption, which she contracted in a long residence upon earth, among a weak and degenerate race of beings.*

- Edward Gibbon

At a press briefing in Washington early last March, the National Association of Evangelicals declared its intent to lend a hand in the making of an American politics faithful to the will and “abundant wisdom” of God. Taking into account the many and atrocious proofs of God’s incompetence as a politician, the announcement in less troubled times might have been seen as a clownish hallucination or a bleak postmodern joke, but the association numbers its membership at thirty million exalted souls, one fourth of the nation’s eligible voters, and so the news media in attendance were careful not to laugh when the telegenic pastors, smooth-faced and smiling, distributed a twelve-page manifesto for a Bible-based public policy entitled “An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility.”



The words were pretty enough, but to read the document with any care for its meaning was to recognize it as a bullying threat backed with the currencies of jihadist fervor and invincible ignorance. Like the prophet Isaiah, who beheld the foul sewer of the earth “polluted under the inhabitants thereof,” the latter-day bringers of joy and righteousness from the suburbs of Los Angeles and the mountains of Colorado believe themselves obliged to cleanse the world of its impurities — to render

justice, reward merit, mete out punishments — and the first few sentences of their joint statement stand as fair indicators of the tone in which they describe the rest of the program:

*We engage in public life because God created our first parents in his image and gave them dominion over the earth. (Genesis 1:27-28) ... We also engage in public life because Jesus is Lord over every area of life ... to restrict our stewardship to the private sphere would be to deny an important part of his dominion and to functionally abandon it to the Evil One. To restrict our political concerns to matters that touch only on the private and the domestic spheres is to deny the all-encompassing Lordship of Jesus (Revelation 19:16).*

Elsewhere in the document the pastors complain of “the bias of aggressive secularism” so entrenched in the liberal news media that “the presence and role of religion in public life is attacked more fiercely now than ever.”

Would that it were so. No citizen can stand for public office in the United States without first pledging allegiance to the King of Kings. Far from being scornful of the messages blown through the trumpets of doom, the news media make a show of their civility and a virtue of their silence; here to please and not to think; every American free

to worship the reflection of his or her own fear; no superstition more deserving than another, no imbecile vision in the desert that can't be sold to a talk show, a circus, or the Republican caucus in the House of Representatives.

We used to know better, and to clear away the mess of sanctimony that now seeps into so much of the public mumbling about religion, I find that I'm better served by some of the country's nineteenth-century writers, among them Mark Twain, Ambrose Bierce, and Robert Green Ingersoll, than by a contemporary press too often wrapped in the cellophane of political correctness. Twain discovered in the Bible "noble poetry ... some clever fables; and some blood-drenched history; ... a wealth of obscenity; and upwards of a thousand lies"; on the off-chance that a few of his readers had missed the point, he later extended his remarks with a brief sketch of the merciful and Almighty Father revealed in the books of the Old Testament:

*The portrait is substantially that of a man — if one can imagine a man charged and overcharged with evil impulses far beyond the human limit; a personage whom no one, perhaps, would desire to associate with now that Nero and Caligula are dead. In the Old Testament His acts expose His vindictive, unjust, ungenerous, pitiless and vengeful nature constantly. He is always punishing — punishing trifling misdeeds with thousandfold severity; punishing innocent children for the misdeeds of their parents; punishing unoffending populations for the misdeeds of their rulers; even descending to wreak bloody vengeance upon harmless calves and lambs and sheep and bullocks as punishment for inconsequential trespasses committed by their proprietors. It is perhaps the most damnatory biography that exists in print anywhere.*

Like Twain, Ingersoll understood that nobody with a sense of humor ever founded a religion, and as the foremost orator of America's Gilded Age, he was famous for the public lectures in which he comforted the sinners and confounded the saints with the tenor of his wit: "Is there an intelligent man or woman now in the world who believes in the Garden of Eden story? If you find any man who believes it, strike his forehead and you will hear an echo. Something is for rent." Or again, on the separation of church and state, "An infinite

God ought to be able to protect himself, without going in partnership with State Legislatures."

As an unbaptised child raised in a family that went to church only for weddings and funerals, I didn't encounter the problem of religious belief until I reached Yale College in the 1950s, where I was informed by the liberal arts faculty that it wasn't pressing because God was dead.

What remained to be discussed was the autopsy report; apparently there was still some confusion about the cause and time of death, and the undergraduate surveys of Western civilization offered a wide range of options — God disemboweled by Machiavelli in sixteenth-century Florence, assassinated in eighteenth-century Paris by agents of the French Enlightenment, lost at sea in 1834 while on a voyage to the Galapagos Islands, blown to pieces by German artillery at Verdun, garroted by Friedrich Nietzsche on a Swiss Alp, and the body laid to rest in the consulting rooms of Sigmund Freud.

On the evidence presented in the history books, the exit strategy wasn't as important as the good news that the Great Man was well and truly gone. Over a span of nearly 2,000 years, He had let loose upon the earth a sea of blood almost of a match with Lake Superior, and in the long list of religious wars, inquisitions, jousts, massacres, persecutions, and burnings at the stake, I remember the Albigensian Crusade as the baseline measure for all the rest. Pope Innocent III gave his blessing to the program of systematic terror sustained for nearly twenty years against the townspeople of the Languedoc, and to the command of the papal armies he assigned Arnaud-Amalric, the ruling abbot of the Cistercians. When the abbot's troops burned the city of Beziers in 1209 and made prisoners of its 15,000 inhabitants, they asked the supreme monk how they were to distinguish between those still faithful to Holy Church and those who had strayed into the paths of wickedness. "Kill them all!" Amalric is reported to have said. "God will recognize His own." The word to the wise has come down to us through the cen-

turies in the form of policy initiatives blessed by Lucretia Borgia, Torquemada, the bishops of Siena and Rouen, Suleiman the Magnificent, Vlad the Impaler, Generals Erich Ludendorff and Alexander Haig, Josef Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Al Capone, Osama bin Laden, and the US Air Force.

My unassigned wanderings in the Yale libraries and bookstores invariably led to authors with a sense of irony or humor, and by the time I left college in 1956, I assumed that God's once awful and majestic presence had been contained within the walls of a museum or the music of J S Bach. The mistake was an easy one to make for a young newspaperman loose in the city of New York in the 1960s with a secular habit of mind and enough money to pay the tithes both to Eros and to Mammon. My travels seldom took me anywhere except to California, and although I heard rumors of the religious enthusiasms roaming the American plains, I chose to regard them as preposterous. If in Florida I sometimes ran across a true believer in an airport or hotel bar, I avoided the embarrassment of a conversation about the Second Coming in much the same way that I'd learned to withhold comment when asked for an opinion by the author of a misshapen novel.

By the middle 1980s, I understood that God had worked another of his miracles, risen from the graves of skepticism and science, moving east from Oklahoma with a great host of gospel-singing Baptists. He began to appear at political rallies clothed in the raiment of Jesus, introduced by the apostles of the newly awakened Christian right as the man to see about buying real estate in heaven — no money down, no homosexuals in the golf shop, every condo equipped with a barbecue pit for the roasting of chestnuts and secular humanists.

As a sales promotion for the sweet hereafter, the message brought by Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority borrowed more heavily from the vicious prophecies of the Old Testament than from the gentler teachings of the New, but during the decade of the 1990s, it attracted increasingly large numbers of increasingly enraged and paranoid disciples who

came together as a political constituency in time to provide George W. Bush with a winning margin of electoral votes in last year's presidential election. Responsive to the kind of people on whom it depends for support, the White House grounded the campaign on the twin pillars of fear and intimidation — the promise of never-ending Holy War on terrorism accompanied by political favors for those of the nation's pastors who threatened their congregations with the news that a vote for John Kerry was a one-way ticket to eternal damnation. On the day after the election, Bush received a note from Bob Jones III, president of the eponymously named university in South Carolina: "... if you have weaklings around you who do not share your biblical values, shed yourself of them ..."

Advice administered as threat conforms to the ethic of the government currently in office in Washington, consistent not only with the character of the deity portrayed in the Old Testament but also with the modus operandi of the Corleone and Gambino crime families. Profess loyalty, show respect, launder the money, or expect to wind up whacked or left behind. The born-again capos and underbosses of the Bush Administration (the President himself; Tom DeLay, majority leader in the House; Senators Rick Santorum [R, Pennsylvania] and Sam Brownback [R, Kansas]; Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice) make their bones by robbing the poor to pay the rich and holding fast to the doctrine of preemptive strike, as certain as the prophet Ezekiel that on the day of wrath when the Lord redeems mankind in a flood of purifying fire and a wonder of Hollywood explosions, the faithful and the pure in heart shall find their way home to Paradise.

The guarantee of terrible punishment for God's enemies, combined with the assurance of an ending both happy and profitable for God's business associates, provides the plot for the Left Behind series of neo-Christian fables (thirteen volumes, 62 million copies sold) that have risen in popularity over the last ten years in concert with the spread of fundamentalist religious beliefs and the resurrection of the militant Christ. The co-authors of the

books, Tim LaHaye and Jerry P. Jenkins, tell the story of the Rapture on that marvelous and forthcoming day when the saved shall be lifted suddenly to heaven and the damned shall writhe in pain; like most of the prophets who have preceded them to the corporate skyboxes of boundless grace, they express their love of God by rejoicing in their hatred of man.

Just as the Old Testament devotes many finely wrought verses to the extermination of the Midianites (also to the butchering of all the people and fatted calves in Moab), LaHaye and Jenkins give upward of eighty pages to the wholesale slaughter of apostates in Boston and Los Angeles, the words as fondly chosen as the film footage in Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* or the instruments of torture in a seventeenth-century Catholic prison. The twelfth book in the series delights in the spectacle of divine retribution at the battle of Armageddon: "Their innards and entrails gushed to the desert floor, and as those around them turned to run, they too were slain, their blood pooling and rising in the unforgiving brightness of the glory of Christ."

Twenty years ago I would have discounted the stories as childish entertainments comparable to a Tom Clancy or a Harry Potter novel, but the same stupidity now shows up in the "biblically balanced agenda" brought down by the evangelical pastors from Mount Ararat in Colorado and by the gospels of fear and hate (cf page 55) espoused by Dr James Dobson's Focus on the Family.

Guided by God's command to impose His sovereignty over "every area of life," public and political as well as private and domestic, Pastor Dobson's apparat endorses political candidates who favor the execution of homosexuals and of doctors who provide abortions. I don't think they're joking. The House of Representatives now shelters 130 members who believe themselves born again in Christ, and in late March, under pressure from the communities of religious fervor gathered in the country's prayer tents, it voted (on behalf of a Florida woman's divine right to life) to replace the

laws of the United States with what it was pleased to acknowledge as the will of God.

The faith-based initiative descends upon the multitude in the glorious cloud of unknowing that over the last twenty years has engulfed vast tracts of the American mind in the fogs of superstition — the regressions apparent on the liberal as well as on the conservative aisles of the political argument, evident in the challenges to the teaching of evolution mounted in forty-three states, attested to by the popular belief that Saddam Hussein possessed a magical store of nuclear weapons, by the drainings of public money from the research sciences and the study of history, most wonderfully of all by President Bush's offering his ignorance as the proof of his virtue, claiming that America can rule and govern a world about which it chooses to know as little as possible.

The delusional is no longer marginal, and we err on the side of folly if we continue to grant the boon of tolerance to people who mean to do us harm in the conviction that they receive from Genesis the command "to take dominion over the earth," to build the Kingdom of God, to create the Christian Nation. The proposition is as murderous as it is absurd, and by way of rebuttal we would do well to refer to the sarcasms of Twain and to the intelligence of Ingersoll's essay "God and the Constitution":

*When the theologian governed the world, it was covered with huts and hovels for the many, palaces and cathedrals for the few ... The poor were clad in rags and skins - they devoured crusts, and gnawed bones. The day of Science dawned, and ... There is more of value in the brain of an average man of today — of a master-mechanic, of a chemist, of a naturalist, of an inventor, than there was in the brain of the world four hundred years ago. These blessings did not fall from the skies. These benefits did not drop from the outstretched hands of priests. They were not found in cathedrals or behind altars — neither were they searched for with holy candles. They were not discovered by the closed eyes of prayer, nor did they come in answer to superstitious supplication. They are the children of freedom, the gifts of reason, observation and experience — and for them all, man is indebted to man.*

Amen.

# ONLINE RESPONSES

to Lewis Lapham's

## "The Wrath of the Lamb"

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### BLOG **A**

by "Fastball"  
July 2005 — The South

Anyone else noticing a consistent trend in the liberal media these days? They are comparing Christians to terrorists in an obvious attempt to paint us as "religious zealots" who would kill for our beliefs. It's becoming a regular mantra for the libs. Here is a recent example:

In the May issue of *Harper's* magazine, a series of cover story articles appeared under the headline, "The Christian Right's War On America." *Harper's* editor Lewis Lapham began the persecution with an article called, "The Wrath of the Lamb," where he characterized Christians as "increasingly large numbers of increasingly enraged and paranoid disciples who came together as a political constituency" just in time to get George Bush re-elected.

He referred to Christian's stupidity as something resulting from "the gospels of fear and hate" espoused by believers. It just got worse from there as Lapham claimed that Christianity "has engulfed vast tracts of

the American mind in the fogs of superstition."

Then came more vile articles, one especially hateful one by Chris Hedges, where Christians were compared to Nazis and fascists. He closed his venomous attack by quoting Dr. James Luther Adams, a former Harvard Divinity School professor. Hedges wrote: "But fascism, warned Adams, ... would not return wearing swastikas and brown shirts. Its ideological inheritors would cloak themselves in the language of the Bible; they would come carrying crosses and chanting the Pledge of Allegiance."

I have many more such examples of media rage toward Christians, but I just wanted to use this one to make the point and to say that the day may come soon when new "anti-terrorist" laws are used to silence Christian ministries and close down churches.

It's not such a far-fetched concept folks, and there is plenty of historical precedent for such actions. We must stay alert to the subtle (and obvious) tactics of the enemy as he uses his allies in the media turn the hearts of the lukewarm against the Body of Christ. Each year the line in the sand grows deeper.

Good news, though ... Jesus wins.

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### BLOG **B**

by "Grackyfrogg"  
May 2005 — California

I was appalled by the May issue of *Harper's* magazine, which contains articles about The Christian Right and its War on America, Christianity's influence on economics, and a report on megachurch

New Life Church in Colorado Springs.

Article writers like Lewis Lapham ("Notebook: The Wrath of the Lamb") and Jeff Sharlet ("Soldiers of Christ: 1. Inside America's Most Powerful Megachurch") paint a picture of Christians as an army of empty-headed morons pinning their beliefs on a non-existent God as a way of justifying their political conservatism. That's a simplification, of course,

but I'd say it is a pretty accurate sum-up of their basic premises.

Obviously I disagree with the foundation on which they build their cases, being a Christian myself. However, at the same time, I am forced to acknowledge that, at least as far as Christianity in politics goes, they bring up some issues that can't be dismissed. Personally, I think something terribly ugly happens to Christianity when it makes its way into the political arena, and I start to understand why Jesus always avoided getting embroiled in politics, and would hide himself away whenever he suspected that followers and adoring crowds were planning to make him king. He said his kingdom wasn't of this world, and I wonder if sometimes the political Christian Right has forgotten this.

... You see, I want people to know the Jesus I'm just starting to know myself, and how can they when

they read about New Life Church in *Harper's*. I want people to know the comfort of a God who, though wild and untamable and utterly beyond my control, is there for me when I need him. How can I explain it? How can I make anyone see what I'm talking about without coming off like a total weirdo myself? I can't, at least not to those who don't know me. But those of you who do ... have I given you cause to think I'm crazy? To think I'm stupid, gullible, or prone to uncritical acceptance of any belief? You know I haven't. And if you know that, then you should at least consider what I'm telling you. Consider that it might be true. That maybe, just maybe, there is a God out there and we need him. That maybe, just maybe, Jesus really was something completely different than ourselves, and yet very much the same. And that maybe, just maybe, there's a reason to believe that the things he said and did are worth investigating for yourself.

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## BLOG C

by Gabriel Sanchez  
June 2005 — Chicago

In reading the latest issue of *Harper's*, I found myself brought to sincere anger and frustration over Lewis Lapham's Notebook entry, entitled "The Wrath of the Lamb." I was so annoyed, in fact, that it compelled me to fire off a letter in response to the piece. While I am not sure if it is "publish" worthy, I do feel some sense of satisfaction for having sent it. Even if it never sees the light of day (or even Lewis Lapham's eyes), I'm sure writing it was still an exponentially more productive exercise than drawing myself into a Live Journal spat. For those of you so inclined, you may read below.

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Lewis Lapham's notebook entry, "The Wrath of the Lamb" lets his secular vanity shine through as he swaps out the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel of the Old Testament for Twain and Ingersoll of the so-called "Age of Doubt."

Instead of meeting the evangelical revival in the United States head on with a critique of their reading of Scripture which spurs their questionable advocacy of legislation in the name of God, Lapham blows forth childish snot rockets, covering his opposition in filthy generalizations which would very well elicit the outcry of "Bigot!" if it were geared towards any other segment of the population. It is difficult not to read Lapham's account of his own experiences with religion (or lack thereof) as one of revelry, throwing up three cheers for his own ignorance of the "superstitions" of the hoi polloi as he lambastes the President for treating his own on world affairs as a virtue.

What is most disturbing about Lapham's "critique" is how willing he is to pick up upon the very worst incidences of religious fervor and hold them up as normative for the Christian Faith. In recalling the evils of persecution and intolerance incompatible with a true following of Christ, he feels uncompelled to mention those other historic landmarks of individuals fueled by Christian "superstition": the reversing of brutal practices of infanticide in the barbarian and Hellenistic world; the preservation and reincor-

poration of the wisdom of antiquity into Western civilization; the construction of a written alphabet for the Slavic peoples; and, last but not least, the full valuation of humanity based not upon transient, socially constructed maxims, but by the revelation that all have been created in the image and likeness of God.

Lapham is right to point out that the modern marriage of religious right zealotry to American politics presents certain difficulties which ought to be addressed. However, the arrogant manner in which he approaches the topic of faith coupled with his condescending attitude towards those who hold to it offers

nothing but another secularist turd into the toilet of public discourse on religion, where the whines of, “No church and state!”, “Reason over revelation!”, and “Free thought! Free thought!” have long sat stinking, their flushing long overdue.

Lapham closes his remarks by advocating that the religious no longer be granted the “boon of tolerance”; our true pathway has been laid forth by secularism, the sort of which arose in the 19th Century with its twin harpies of historicism and nihilism. I do have to wonder if Lapham is willing to give its products, the gas chambers of Auschwitz and the Soviet Gulag, the same robust treatment.

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## BLOG D

by Wendell Krossa  
May 2005

Modern Evangelicals have largely ignored the historical Jesus, whose residual image is still visible in the gospels, to focus almost exclusively on the Christ of the rest of the New Testament. Note, for instance, something of the character of this Christ in the book of Revelation which details his enraged fury. This Christ exhibits a terrible thirst for the destruction of the enemies of God. He longs to fulfill the desires of his people to destroy their enemies utterly. Lewis Lapham captures something of the blood lust that this Christ validates in an article in *Harpers* (May/05). He notes that modern Christians “express their love of God by rejoicing in their hatred of man” (“The Wrath of the Lamb”, p.9). He refers to the *Left Behind* novels by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins which devote some 80 pages to the slaughter of apostates.

Evangelicals have employed their vision of an excluding, punishing Christ to justify their endeavors to subvert the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians. They regularly travel to Israel to urge Jews to expel all Arabs from Israel because, according to the Bible, all the land of Palestine has been promised to the Jews. Israel will be the center of Christ’s kingdom in the future. These Evangelicals entertain no caution regarding the consequent war that would

probably result from their stubborn intransigence toward Arabs. Such a war would in fact fulfill their hoped-for prophesies of wholesale slaughter at Armageddon.

Only a people blinded by such a distorting and dehumanizing mythology could argue that a man coming to make peace (the Anti-Christ) is evil, while their war-mongering Christ is the epitome of good. The anti-Christ is actually more like the historical Jesus than the Christ is. How far Christianity has departed from the message of Jesus. How far it has slid down the slippery slope. In the Christian Christ, one of history’s most humane persons has been refashioned into one of history’s vilest demons. And he has a long history of validating the darkest of human impulses for vengeance and destruction.

The gospel of the Christian Christ is a gospel of fear, exclusion, domination, hate, and destruction. It is entirely opposite on all points to the teaching of the historical Jesus who advocated unconditional forgiveness, inclusion, service, and love for enemies. Christianity has done immeasurable harm by burying the message of Jesus under the distortion known as Christ. Where Jesus advocated love of enemies, the Christ advocates punishment and destruction of enemies. This harsh emphasis on vengeance and punishment has long validated Christian cruelty, conflict, torture, banishment, and out right war against the perceived enemies of Christianity.

The maxim that you can’t serve two masters was nev-

er more applicable than to this issue of Jesus versus Christ. You can not synthesize love and hate. You can't merge the historical Jesus and the Christian Christ into one and the same person. They are entire opposites. And in employing the metaphor of master I am not suggesting that Jesus is any more of an authority on anything than you or I are. To view him as an authority figure is to also distort his message of inclusiveness, mutual service and love. The value of Jesus lies in his unique expression of humane re-

sponse which many believe is an expression of the image of God ("do this and you will be like your Father in heaven").

The Christian Christ has had a highly damaging influence on Christian consciousness and the wider human consciousness over the past two millennia. It is time we took the research of the Jesus Seminar seriously and once again differentiated clearly between Jesus and Christ.

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## BLOG **E**

by Chase  
May 2005 — New York

For my plane ride last weekend, I picked up a copy of *Harper's Magazine*, a magazine I had never bothered to pick up before. My first impression with it was that its target audience seemed to be the "liberal elite" — that amorphous group of ne'er-do-wells that right-wing radio talk show hosts are always going on about. The ads, editorials and many of the articles reminded me a bit of my 8th grade English teacher who wore a really tight bow-tie and looked down his nose at anyone who didn't get his literary reference-tinged jokes. ("The Heathcliff I was referring to wasn't a cat...")

The prime example of this sort of snottiness comes in the editorial by Lewis H. Lapham entitled "The Wrath of the Lamb." I'm not familiar with Mr. Lapham, but I think he would have gotten along with my 8th grade English teacher. His editorial was a broadside against all people of faith, and through some allusions to Mark Twain and some boring and irrelevant autobiography, he proceeds to lump all religious people together with fundamentalists and psychopaths. His rant goes on to castigate anyone foolish enough to hold religious beliefs. What surprised me was how similar his language was to Christian fundamentalists. Just take out the words "Christian" and "faith" and replace them with "godless" and "secular humanist" and I don't think there would be a difference. It was astounding to me, because I just really didn't think the antireligious

pseudo-intellectual types that fundamentalists were railing about actually existed as anything other than a straw man for their own lousy arguments. We'll see if I can muster up a letter to the editor about this lazily constructed diatribe.

The reason I picked up the magazine was not for Lapham, however, but for two articles in this issue, both of which are worth the cover price.

The first is by Jeff Sharlet, the editor of *The Revealer*, the best web site out there for examining the media's poor coverage of religion. (*The Revealer* has posted a link to this blog in the past and we're honored by the attention.). Sharlet's article, "Inside America's Most Powerful Mega-church," is an eye-opening look into New Life Church in Colorado Springs, whose pastor heads the National Association of Evangelicals and talks with President Bush on a weekly basis. Most interesting was his depiction of Colorado Springs as its own evangelical sub-culture and the militaristic and apocalyptic way many of its residents view the rest of the world. Most alarming was the way many of the people mentioned in the article understood the Iraq war as a part of the coming religious war between a Christian America and Islam (read: Satanism). This understanding of Christianity is so far removed from my own that I walked away from the article deeply troubled.

The second article is by Chris Hedges (author of the most interesting-sounding book that I haven't read yet *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*). Hedges is a former war correspondent and holds a degree from Harvard Divinity School, so he may be uniquely suited to understand the militaristic language used by

leaders in the Christian Right. The article, “Feeling the Hate with the National Religious Broadcasters,” is his account of attending the NRBA convention, where he got to mingle with such Christian dignitaries as James Dobson. Most interesting was his discussion with members of the Bureau of Tourism of the Israeli government who come to gatherings of American Christian fundamentalists, because these are the only people who want to visit Israel anymore. The Israelis find the convention-goers anti-Semitic and ignorant, but they come anyway, because Christian fundamentalists pump a ridiculous amount of money into their economy. Out of their particular skewed reading of the book of Revelation, Christian fundamentalists believe that the Jewish state is the future location of the battle of Armageddon — never mind the fact that the Jews will either all be converted to Christianity or slaughtered by a bloodthirsty Christ in their end of the world scenario. Most alarming was the comparison Hedges draws between the political tactics of the Religious Right and the Nazis in the 1930’s. What at first seemed to me like an alarmist opinion quickly turned into me

being alarmed at similarities between the scapegoating and demonization done by both groups.

So, all that is to say, I recommend this month’s issue of *Harper’s Magazine*, just disregard Lapham’s editorial.

One final note: Joe M. passed along today’s editorial by David Brooks in the *NY Times*. Entitled, “A Natural Alliance,” it speaks about the unlikely pairing of evangelicals and political liberals when it comes to eliminating extreme poverty. It’s an exciting occurrence, one that gives me hope that American Christianity isn’t entirely in thrall to the idols of free market capitalism. It also includes a nice mention of the work done by Bono, lead singer of the greatest rock band in the world, U2, to court the evangelicals and people of all religious and political persuasions in order to combat extreme global poverty and the AIDS epidemic. Once again, I’ll mention the One Campaign and urge you to go to their site ([www.one.org](http://www.one.org)) and sign their petition.

