

Fall Of The House Of Fundamentalism

by Art Ticknor

“Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad.” That about sums up the story, for now, on the meteoric fall from grace of three of America’s most best-known evangelical preachers, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and Franklin Graham (son, and designated heir of Rev. Billy Graham). While the trio’s demise has been most closely associated with their psychotic pronouncements following the assaults on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, an earlier incident, exclusively reported in *EIR*, brought about the more recent course of events.

On July 30, 2001, aides of Falwell and Robertson joined two of America’s leading right-wing Zionists, Herb Zweibon of Americans for a Safe Israel and Morton Klein of Zionist Organization of America, in a crude effort to blackmail the President of the United States into giving his unambiguous “green light” to Ariel Sharon’s butchery of the Palestinians. The White House blackmail session involved direct threats that a significant part of the 70 million evangelical Christian voters would abandon G.W. Bush, as they had abandoned his father and caused the elder Bush’s 1992 reelection defeat (see *EIR* Aug. 24, 2001, “Temple Mount Fanatics Seek To Blackmail Bush,” by Anton Chaitkin).

What made the Bush-bashing effort all the more nasty was the fact, also revealed by *EIR*, that the delegation of Christian Zionists and Zionist Lobby rightists had met, just hours before the White House meeting, with Israeli Ambassador David Ivrey at the Israeli Embassy.

Backfire

Falwell and Robertson have long been associated with the campaign to blow up the Islamic holy sites on the Temple Mount/Al-Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem, and rebuild the Third Temple of Solomon, an event they claim would bring on the final battle of Armageddon, the extermination of the Jews, and the second coming of Christ. Each year, U.S.-based Christian Zionists, associated with Falwell, Robertson, and the Dallas Theological Seminary, send millions of dollars to Jewish Temple Mount cultists inside Israel, who stage frequent provocations at the Islamic holy sites. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has been Israel’s most widely recognized patron of the Temple Mount Faithful.

Sources familiar with the July 30 White House session

have told *EIR*, that President Bush and his top aides were furious at the blackmail tactics. Subsequently, White House political director Karl Rove, according to these sources, concluded that the blackmail ploy was not credible. Rove concluded that President Bush’s support within the conservative Christian community was far more substantial than that of his father—even before the President’s handling of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Thus, Falwell and Robertson—along with their Zionist Lobby rightwing compatriots—had already alienated the President from them, long before their forked tongues took over on Sept. 11.

Two days after the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, Rev. Jerry Falwell and “Diamond Pat” Robertson placed the blame for the disaster on the immorality of a society that accepts abortionists, feminists, and homosexuals, provoking a firestorm of criticism—even among their Christian fundamentalist base—for their crude hate-mongering and hypocrisy.

Robertson’s corrupt relationship in a joint gold-mining venture with the murderous Liberian dictator Charles Taylor—himself involved in the illicit sale of diamonds, with alleged ties to Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda—has recently exposed Robertson’s willingness to “deal with the devil,” if there is a buck to be made. Robertson’s petty corruption and hypocrisy became such a matter of public exposure that on Dec. 5, he resigned as president of the Christian Coalition, the political group he founded in 1989. With his resignation, the group is expected to shut down altogether, soon.

Foul Pronouncements

In the new political geometry created by the Sept. 11 attacks, it were possible to completely destroy the credibility of these fundamentalist barkers, thereby helping to derail the scheme for a clash of civilizations (or, Armageddon) that they promote.

“What we saw on Tuesday, as terrible as it is, could be minuscule if, in fact, God continues to lift the curtain and allow the enemies of America to give us probably what we deserve,” said Falwell to “700 Club” host Robertson on Sept. 13 on the Christian Broadcasting Network.

“Jerry, that’s my feeling,” Robertson responded.

“The ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] has got to take a lot of blame for this,” Falwell said.

“Well, yes,” Robertson agreed.

Falwell continued: “The abortionists have got to bear some burden for this, because God will not be mocked. And when we destroy 40 million little innocent babies, we make God mad. I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way—all of them who have tried to

secularize America—I point the finger in their face and say, ‘You helped this happen.’”

“Well, I totally concur,” Robertson replied.

A few hours later, Falwell repeated his remarks, telling the *New York Times* that “the collective efforts of many secularists . . . has left us vulnerable.”

The next day, President Bush called the remarks “inappropriate,” prompting Falwell to claim, in a statement posted on his website, that his comments “were taken out of context.” Robertson issued his own statement: “It is happening because God Almighty is lifting His protection from us,” due to our “pursuit of financial gain.” The irony of this pronouncement’s easy application to Robertson himself, was not lost on those who know of his dirty diamond-mining operations in war-torn Congo.

Falwell “apologized” on Sept. 17, saying his comments were “insensitive,” “uncalled for,” and “unnecessary.” This followed Robertson’s strange statement that they were “severe and harsh in tone and, frankly, not fully understood.”

The *Washington Post* ran “Mr. Falwell’s Message of Hatred” on Sept. 18, while the London *Guardian* noted the next day, that “the cruelest, sickest response to the calamity” came from “two self-styled American super-patriots.” Falwell went on Geraldo Rivera’s cable TV show to “repudiate” his remarks on Sept. 19, and told ABC News on Sept. 20 that he “misspoke totally and entirely.”

A barrage of criticism flooded the media. “Perhaps now, Robertson and Falwell will be seen by all Americans for what they are: not pillars of morality or comforters in faith, but cynical, intolerant money-grubbers who use God to milk the vulnerable and to spread hate,” wrote Judy Mann in the *Washington Post* on Sept. 21. She added, “with any luck the nation will send them into the obscurity they so richly merit.” They were denounced by Timothy George, the editor of *Christianity Today*, in the *Wall Street Journal*, the dean of conservative radio hot-air balloons Rush Limbaugh, and *Boston Globe* columnist Ellen Goodman.

Two weeks later, the Jerry Falwell Ministries sent out a fund-raising letter written by Falwell’s son, charging, “Satan has launched a hail of fiery darts at dad.”

‘Robertson’s Gold Fever’

Robertson’s problems were just beginning, as *Washington Post* columnist Colbert King began a series of articles on Sept. 22, detailing Robertson’s business deal with Liberian dictator Charles Taylor. The two men are engaged in a joint gold-mining venture in Liberia, Freedom Gold Ltd. (registered in the Cayman Islands, a renowned offshore tax haven). King uncovered a May 18, 1999 mining contract, signed by Robertson, Taylor, and several Liberian ministers, giving Robertson mining rights to mineral deposits estimated at more than \$2 billion, and assuring that Taylor got a cut of the action, including \$500,000 annually in investment

and rental fees.

Taylor was in the putschist regime of Sgt. Sam Doe, which overthrew the elected President, William Tolbert, in 1980, but he had a falling out with Doe, when it was discovered that Taylor had pilfered \$900,000 in government funds and fled to the United States. Taylor was jailed in the United States on an extradition warrant, and escaped, finding his way to Libya. In Libya, he allied with Sierra Leone rebel Foday Sankoh, whose Revolutionary United Front (RUF) is engaged in black market diamond mining and smuggling, with alleged ties to Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda. Taylor reportedly facilitates the illicit sale of diamonds mined by the RUF, to al-Qaeda.

“Pat Robertson’s Gold Fever,” an article in the December 2001 issue of *Gentleman’s Quarterly*, cites a UN report issued in December 2000, charging that Taylor supported RUF atrocities (amputating the limbs of opponents in Sierra Leone) by supplying RUF units with arms, in exchange for smuggled blood diamonds, a trade said to be worth as much as \$125 million per year.

“What is Pat Robertson, self-professed Christian leader and American patriot, doing in bed with a dictator who may soon face an international war-crimes tribunal?” asks *GQ*.

In short, the unsavory activities of “Diamond Pat,” which were exposed by this news service frequently, have suddenly, since Sept. 11, taken on a damning tarnish in the eyes of millions.

In his most extreme lunacy since the terror attacks, Robertson on Sept. 18 repeated his call on the people of the United States to repent, but then demanded they prepare to carry out “Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz’s proposal” to eliminate seven Islamic states, and prepare for war against the world’s 1 billion Muslims who consider these states “brothers.” This particular “700 Club” diatribe undoubtedly did Wolfowitz no good within the administration.

Most recently, on Dec. 11, even as he was exiting the Christian Coalition, Robertson interviewed Israeli fascist and former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the “700 Club,” and proclaimed Netanyahu’s call to remove the “terrorist regime” of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, a “clear insight of what needs to be done.” Netanyahu said that “as long as this regime governs the Palestinians, we will not have the peace we pray for,” and thanked Robertson for his consistent support.

Rev. Franklin Graham (whose father Rev. Billy Graham is soon to be knighted by the Queen Elizabeth II) joined Robertson in trying to trigger Armageddon, by calling Islam a “very evil and wicked religion,” in an October interview. Responding to criticism, he told the *Wall Street Journal* on Dec. 3 that “the persecution or elimination of non-Muslims has been a cornerstone of Islamic conquests and rule for centuries.”