

# Apocalypse... Now?

**Dale Parsons**

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Numerous points relevant to my January 14 article "[Retrogression at Heart of Tucson Arizona Shooting](#)" occurred to me or were brought to my attention since it was published. I want to discuss two of these: 1) Sarah Palin's attack on journalists — "Journalists and pundits should not manufacture a 'blood libel' that serves only to incite the very hatred and violence they purport to condemn. That is irresponsible." 2) One of Glenn Beck's rants, "The clock is ticking.... The war is just beginning.... Shoot me in the head if you try to change our government.... You have to be prepared to take rocks to the head.... The other side is attacking.... There is a coup going on.... Grab a torch!... Drive a stake through the heart of the blood suckers.... They are taking you to a place to be slaughtered.... They are putting a gun to America's head.... Hold these people responsible."

Let's begin with Sarah Palin's provocative use of the term "blood libel" to describe her critics' attacks against her. The term blood libel has long been used to describe the anti-Semitic slander that Jews murder Christian children to use their blood in religious rituals. Since Palin isn't Jewish, what does the term blood libel have to do with her? Sarah Palin doesn't believe her use of a historically charged term would cause violence, but she does seem to believe that any criticism of *her* would cause violence.

By now everyone is familiar with Sarah Palin's map of twenty Democratic congressional districts targeted to incite the faithful. To get a sense of Palin's worldview, I checked out her church, the Wasilla Assembly of God, part of the Evangelical Pentecostal denomination. Pentecostalism is a movement within [Christianity](#) that places special emphasis on a direct personal experience of [God](#) through the [baptism in the Holy Spirit](#). Pentecostalism is an [umbrella term](#) that includes a wide range of different theologies and cultures. For example, many Pentecostals are [Trinitarian](#), while others are [Nontrinitarian](#). As a result, there is no single central organization or church that directs the movement. While speaking in tongues frequently receives strong emphasis among Pentecostals, most also believe in the existence of other supernatural gifts that may be received from the Holy Spirit, like faith healing, miracle working, prophecy (the pronouncement of a message from God, not necessarily involving knowledge of the future), discerning of [spirits](#) (the ability to tell if evil spirits are at work).

In their [article in the Huffington Post](#), Nico Pitney and Sam Stein offer more glimpses into Sarah Palin's views: "Speaking before the Pentecostal church, Palin painted the current war in Iraq as a

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messianic affair in which the United States could act out the will of the Lord. ‘Pray for our military men and women who are striving to do what is right. Also, for this country, that our leaders, our national leaders, are sending [U.S. soldiers] out on a task that is from God,’ she exhorted the congregants. ‘That’s what we have to make sure that we’re praying for, that there is a plan and that that plan is God’s plan.’ Palin asked the congregation to pray for a \$30 billion oil pipeline to be built in Alaska. ‘I think God’s will has to be done in unifying people and companies to get that gas line built, so pray for that,’ she said.”

Ed Kalnins, the senior pastor of the Wasilla Assembly of God since 1999, offers a provocative sketch of Palin’s longtime spiritual home. Pastor Kalnins preached that critics of President Bush would be banished to hell and questioned whether people who voted for Senator John Kerry in 2004 would be accepted into heaven. In another of Pastor Kalnins’ exhortations, on the War in Iraq, he stated, “What you see in a terrorist — that’s called the invisible enemy. There has always been an invisible enemy. What you see in Iraq, basically, is a manifestation of what’s going on in this unseen world called the spirit world.... We need to think like Jesus thinks. We are in a time and a season of war, and we need to think like that. We need to develop that instinct. We need to develop as believers the instinct that we are at war, and that war is contending for your faith. ... Jesus called us to die. You’re worried about getting hurt? He’s called us to die. Listen, you know we can’t even follow him unless you are willing to give up your life. ... I believe that Jesus himself operated from that position of war mode. Everyone say ‘war mode.’ Now you say, wait a minute Ed, he’s like the good shepherd, he’s loving all the time and he’s kind all the time. Oh yes he is — but I also believe that he had a part of his thoughts that knew that he was in a war.” Pastor Kalnins is sanctioning “permanent war.” He repeatedly preaches apocalyptic prophesy about the “end times” or “last days.” [\[link\]](#)

It’s hard to believe Sarah Palin’s conservative Jewish supporters (that include Alan Dershowitz) believe in all of this. I think they just want a potential presidential candidate who is more supportive of the State of Israel than Barack Obama. I think Palin’s appropriation and use of the term, blood libel, was a miscalculation that backfired. Recent polls show Palin’s popularity has decreased since her statements following the January 8, 2011 Tucson, Arizona shooting of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords that left six dead and 13 wounded.

Regarding Glenn Beck, the relationship between “lone wolves” (a term first popularized by white supremacists and now used by law enforcement) and Beck’s apocalyptic rhetoric is easier to see. There are at least two fans of Beck involved in shootings. See Dana Milbank, “[Glenn Beck and the Oakland Shooter](#),” *Washington Post*, Aug. 1, 2010. The first is the so-called “Oakland shooter” of July 2010, Byron Williams. Williams, on parole for bank robbery, told investigators that he wanted “to start a revolution” by “killing people of importance at the public charity Tides Foundation and the ACLU.” Williams can be seen expressing his admiration for Beck on video. Beck attacked the Tides Foundation on several of his shows. Another of Beck’s fans was accused of killing three cops in Pittsburgh. The accused killer had, as part of a pattern of activities

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involving far-right conspiracy theories, posted [a link on a neo-Nazi Web site to a video of Beck](#) talking about the possibility that the Federal Emergency Management Agency was operating concentration camps in Wyoming. Beck has prophesied ominously to his millions of followers that we are reaching “a point where the people will have exhausted all their options. When that happens, look out.” One night on his Fox television show, discussing the case of a man who had killed 10 people, Beck suggested such things were inevitable: “If you’re a conservative, you are called a racist, you want to starve children,” he said, adding: “And every time they do speak out, they are shut down by political correctness. How do you not have those people turn into that guy?”

Those of us who are grappling with comprehending the dialectic of the current stage of capitalist production believe it’s going to get worse. There are no more boom times for capitalism. The decline in the rate of profit reached the tipping point in the 1970’s, which convinced the capitalists that there isn’t enough profit to be made through manufacturing in the U.S. More and more capitalists are coming to believe the only source for profit is in what Marx called “fictitious” capital, that is to say, speculation in finance capital. With the current “Great Recession” caused by inflated profits on fictitious financial capital drying up after the collapse of a speculative bubble, capitalism is compelled to restore profitability the only way it can — by reducing the amount of variable capital (workers’ wages) relative to constant capital. The capitalists see this as the only way capitalism can be restored to its former glory and for unregulated global capital to again have free rein with unlimited profits.

The only way the capitalists can pull this off is by winning the battle of ideas, by convincing us to accept our diminished lot in life, to accept a lower standard of living and most of all, to accept a “permanent” state of retrogression. This is currently being attempted by convincing us that the debt and government spending is the cause of “our” problem. The capitalists are aided in this effort by the constant haranguing and bullying by reactionary right-wing ideologues, talking 24/7 on cable and talk radio. These people will stop at nothing in their war against labor, including the use of apocalyptic rhetoric.

The price we pay for the Right winning the battle of ideas, for not working out a liberatory, comprehensive, *conceptual* alternative to capitalism, is our current oppressive reality. This is at the heart of the emergence of reactionary individuals and groupings, from “lone wolf” assassins and suicide bombers to religious fundamentalists, neo-Nazi White Supremacists, and so-called Patriotic and Militia groups.

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