

An Angel Directs the Storm – Apocalyptic Religion and American Empire
by Michael Northcott. I.B.Tauris 2004.

Michael Northcott is Reader in Christian Ethics at the University of Edinburgh, and, as his profession might suggest, a passionate advocate of Christianity and what, in his opinion, it truly stands for.

An Angel Directs the Storm is a coruscating attack on America, not just, as one might expect, under George W Bush and the 'neocons', but from the Founding Fathers onwards. The author identifies the trends which have given a religious definition and foundation to many national and international policies and then proceeds to demolish the premises on which they are based.

There is no doubt that in Michael Northcott's opinion, almost everything for which America stands, internally and throughout the world, is based on a travesty of Christianity and he demonstrates convincingly why this is the case. In the course of his analysis, his scythe is especially vicious towards aspects of US foreign policy, not least with regard to the State of Israel, the very existence of which he calls into question: much of this makes for highly uncomfortable reading, not least for those of us who would choose to believe that the influence of America in the world is not as irredeemably dark as does Northcott, but the unease does not diminish the compelling nature of his thesis overall.

The final chapter, The Warrior Ethos and the Politics of Jesus, clarify what the author believes Christianity DOES stand for, both intrinsically and in geo-political terms, and leaves the reader in no doubt of the earth-shaking revolution that would occur if Christians world-wide were to see their religious duty in the same way.

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