Religion as Nationalism: The Religious Nationalism of American Christian Zionists

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Religion as Nationalism: The Religious Nationalism of American Christian Zionists

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Abstract

 The term "religious nationalism" is often theorized, at worst as antithetically conjunctive where religion is defined as the allegiance to God and nationalism is the allegiance to the nation, and at best as instrumental. I argue here that this fusion of religion and nationalism takes place most convincingly if we understand religion as adherent performance rather than solely as a theological container of tenants. I illustrate this through American Christian Zionist performances and discourses regarding their self-imagined identity as being in a national diaspora for Israel. I argue this religious nationalism is possible because Christian Zionist performances of a national allegiance to Israeli Jews are grounded in an apocalyptic narrative of the future.

Key words: American Christian Zionists; religious nationalism; diaspora nationalism; apocalypse; eschatology; Israel and Palestine; millennialism

Introduction

There is an almost religious devotion among all nationalisms to a territory or homeland, including frequent religious discourses embedded within performances of nationalism.[1] As John Agnew (2006, p. 185) notes, "much nationalism and imperialism have found purpose and justification in religious difference and in proselytizing." Explicit and well known examples of functional, instrumental, and facilitative uses of religion are currently employed in Turkey, Ukraine, Russia, and the United States among many others for nationalist purposes (Bruce, 2003). But few scholars have wanted to go so far as to say the performance of religion can be through nationalism. This paper challenges and contributes to recent theories, produced largely in sociology, geography, and anthropology, regarding discourses and performances on the relationship between religion and nationalism. I argue that there is a particular kind of religious nationalism of American Christian Zionists, which challenges previous theorizations that suggest religion is nothing more than a foil for nationalism, namely that nationalism is employing religion for foundational myths and veracity. American Christian Zionists reverence for the imagined nation of Israeli Jews is instrumental to their belief in the Second Coming of Christ, but I argue it is no less a part of their religion practices and performances. I

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[1] Along with Sullivan (2011: 31), I believe that "any definitional stability to the terms 'performance' and 'performative' is bound to be wobbly, yielding to the oncoming traffic of differentiated meanings and temporary construals." Unlike Phelan's (1993: 146) claim that "performance's life is in the present," I agree with Austin (1962) and Butler (1990) that 'performative' have lasting impacts on how we understand the past, present, and future. The collapsing of the terms performance/performative is then not used in this article to simply mean theatricality, but is an act: saying, writing, and doing. I use the term 'performance' here because I include non-verbal acts—like money transfers to settlement— to illustrate such actions as part of religious *doing* so as to move away from the immutable confines of researching religion as beliefs and doctrine.

argue that Christian Zionists perform nationalism as an essential part of their religious

practice: religion *as* nationalism.[2]

       This paper is divided into three main sections below. The first section, "religion,

nationalism, diaspora," reviews various scholarly attempts to theorize religious

nationalism, challenging them with the poststructuralist work of Talal Asad (2003). The

second section, "territory and apocalypse," provides a brief history of the idea of the

apocalypse in America as it relates to the New World. It also sketches-out a brief history

of post-Civil War American Protestant national interests in Palestine, illustrating a

historical vacillation between millennial thought and a search for healing origin myths in

relation to America. In the post-1967 period, I outline in depth how Christian Zionists

gained political power in the U.S., fomented an outsider diasporic religious nationalism

for Israel and Jewish Israelis, and how this identity today is shored-up by the

performance of Islam as an evil Other. Through this history I provide discursive evidence

from Christian Zionist leaders that their national loyalty is in the process of shifting from

America to Israel as their perception of End Times draws closer.

       American Christian Zionists are made up of socially conservative Evangelicals[3]

with a premillennial dispensationalist eschatology.[4] Most believe the wars in the Middle

East are portending an imminent End Times scenario, which will be centered in the

modern state of Israel. Here Satan's Russian and Arab led armies meet those non-

Raptured Westerners who serve Christ's army at the battle of Armageddon (Sturm and

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[2] The converse, nationalism *as* religion, could only exist if a deity or the supernatural was central to the performance of nationalism.

[3] Christian Zionists are not exclusively Evangelicals, they are also Pentecostals. The main difference here is that Pentecostals believe they can channel the power of God immanently.

[4] Premillennialism is the belief that Christ will return prior to the millennium to save the world. Postmillennialism is the belief that there will be no intervention by God, only humans can bring about the millennium, whereupon Christ will return.

Dittmer, 2010). In a nutshell, this scenario largely defines the eschatological beliefs of the over 30 million American Christian Zionists (Haija, 2006, p. 75), without which, their national allegiance to the territory of Israel and the perceived religiously homogenous nation of Jews - hence Christian *Zionism* - would not be possible. Jews are seen as the Chosen People of Earth and are, therefore, to be unwaveringly supported as God's army soldiering toward the apocalypse. Protestant Christians, on the other hand, are understood as the Chosen People of Heaven and a post-millennium Earth. This outsider diaspora nationalism is, I argue, a form of religious nationalism, where religious performances of the apocalypse provide the possibility and core discourse for a Christian Zionist nationalism for Jewish Israelis, and a statism for the territory of Israel. This is the inverse of instrumentally employing religious discourse for national ends.

This story of American Christian Zionist nationalism is interesting and begs explanation precisely because it disrupts expectations of ethno-national-religious correspondence. It further shows an unexpectedly convergent expression of religious territoriality, thus contributing to theoretical observations that identities can be multiple and competing, a multiplicity of nationalistic positions (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992). This "Judeo-Evangelical nationalism" is important precisely because it seeks to politically redefine the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, and Israel and America. As Boyer (1993, p. 78) explains in his commanding book on American cultural expectations of the apocalypse, such expectations are not merely reflections of other realities, but rather "apocalyptic cosmologies have functioned dynamically, helping to mould political and social ideology and thus influencing the course of events". Indeed as Mearsheimer

and Walt (2007, p. 137-8) have recently made clear of the political, cultural, and economic implications of Christian Zionists:

> By providing financial support to the settler movement and by publically inveighing against territorial concessions, the Christian Zionists have reinforced hard-line attitudes in Israel and the United States and have made it more difficult for American leaders to put pressure on Israel. Absent their support, settlers would be less numerous in Israel, and the U.S. and Israeli governments would be less constrained by their pressure in the occupied Territories as well as their political activities. Plus, Christian tourism (a substantial portion occurring under the Evangelical auspices) has become a lucrative source of income for Israel, reportedly generating revenues in the neighborhood of $1 billion each year.

Christian Zionists are motivated by an apocalyptic vision that co-constitutionally performs their nationalism for Israel/is. This hyphenation between Jews and Christians is a spatial relationship. It poses that if Israel can be possessed through law, colonialism, and performative definition, then so too can the credentials of truth and faith be possessed, validated, and confirmed. In other words, the possession of territory equates to a possession of truth.

Religion, Nationalism, Diaspora

There is almost a religious devotion among all nationalists to a territory or homeland if we accept Verdery's (1996, p. 226) definition, using Boreman, of nationalism as "conscious sentiments that take the nation as an object of active devotion". In line with

mainline sociology of religion, I define religion as a set of beliefs, actions, performances/rituals, and institutions of devotion that are founded on the existence of supernatural deities who can interfere with and judge earthly, spiritual, and heavenly scales of being (Appleby 2000, p. 8). From a poststructuralist perspective, however, "religion" would be defined by the actors and actions of self-identified religious groups, but crucially, it is important to note that it is intimately wrapped into systems and domains and representations, society and economy. It does not operate independently as a separate variable.

Much of the work on nationalism has tended to ignore religion or explain it as a function of nationalism. In this view, nationalism is a modernist project that replaces religion by emphasizing socioeconomic factors or cultural or political modernity (Durkheim, 2001; Gellner, 1994; cf Asad, 1999; Friedland, 2001). Care must be taken in fusing these two terms together as "religious nationalism" because there are often many reasons for, expressions of, and geographically specific types of nationalism. The use of religious signifiers is but one of them, and is often of secondary influence, epiphenomena, or used as a guise for political means (Agnew, 2008).

Although nationalism certainly has a "spiritual principle," as Ernest Renan (1996[1882], p. 52) classically observed, the attempt to formulate a theory for religious nationalism is one fraught with problems.[5] There have been many attempts to fuse religion and nationalism as it relates to overlapping language, analogous histories, as a part of nationalism, or that there is a particular form of religious nationalism (Brubaker,

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[5] Although Juergensmeyer (1993: 1-2) argues that religious nationalism has replaced Cold War identities, like many scholars at this time looking for a new world order, based on political ideologies: "the new world order that is replacing the bipolar powers of the old Cold War is characterized… by the resurgence of parochial identities based on ethnic and religious allegiances."

2015). Some suggest the term is oxymoronic, as Brubaker (2006, p. 23) provocatively concluded: "nationalist politics is carried out in the name of the nation, religious politics in the name of God." Despite this, I argue that this fusion takes place most convincingly, not in how national discourse is inflected by religious language, or how religious discourse is inflected with nationalist language, but rather, following Talal Asad's (2003) demand, that we again understand the category of religion as one of *performance* rather than solely as *belief*. While this article makes use of texts, doctrines, and institutions, it focuses on *doing* as a category of analysis. Asad (1993) argues that the enlightenment restricted the definition of religion to one centred on text and dogma instead of on the adherents' practices and discourses. Asad has attempted to move beyond the Durkheimian concept of a universal definition of 'religion'. This relates to this research in that American Christian Zionists are unique not just as a group compared to mainstream Protestants and Catholics, but also on a congregational and individual level, with each social scale producing different practices that absorb and reorder specific tenants of American nationalism. Asad proposes that religion should be studied through the performances that give it expression. While not all nationalist expressions are religious, almost any can be adopted into a religious discourse and performed as such, just as any religion can adopt national allegiances as part of the ritualized performance of their religion (McAlister, 2008). As McAlister (2008, p. 875) explains, it is not that "everything is religion, it is just that religion can be virtually anything." Therefore, what we assume to be nationalist language may also be religious practice through prayers, sermons, and pilgrimages, to mention only a few performances. Religious beliefs and performances are not cloistered off from culture, politics, and events nor can they be

essentialized into pure or correct doctrine free from change. This Christian Zionist

nationalism is not only instrumental, Judaism has been internalized into the rites, rituals,

and performances of the affirmation of their religious beliefs (Cohn-Sherbok 2006;

Goldman 2010).[6] Therefore, religion is not simply instrumental to nationalist ends, as in

George W. Bush's appeal to Judeo-Christian values (Kuo 2007). Nor is nationalism here

simply instrumental to religious ends, where, for example, "nationalist language he

[former President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad] has sometimes used at home may be

a cover for sincerely held pan-Islamic ends" (Feldman 2006, np). The performance of

Zionism by Evangelical Christians *is* a performance of their religion. This is not to claim

that Christian Zionists do not anticipate the state of Israel to be superseded by a

Millennial Heaven on Earth, but rather that Judaism, Jews, and Israel are essential parts

to the performance, and therefore practice, of their religion, regardless of them serving an

imminent/immanent function in the continuum of history.

The "nation" is often defined as a group of people who feel they share a common

set of myths concerning a territory, sharing common experiences of danger, destiny,

historical struggles, and cultural affinity in relation to common places. However, I argue

the nation does not exist outside the performance of such binding myths. Instead these

common performances are what can be termed with the verb, "nationalism," or the doing

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[6] Christian Zionism is a contingent and mobile religious identity movement, that is increasingly interested in Judaism and Israelis as an unattainable higher tier in their religious hierarchy. These Evangelicals perform a 'wanna-be' nationalism for Israeli Jews. From over a year of participant observation with Christian Zionists in Israel and Palestine, I observed that Saturdays have often become the Sabbath; Jesus is usually referred to as Yeshua; obeisance to those Evangelicals who were able to find Jewish ancestry and make *Aliyah*; and much premillennialism has moved from pre-tribulation Rapture to post-tribulation Rapture, that is, the Rapture has been moved by most in the movement to come after the Tribulation, at the peak of Armageddon, so that Christians have to suffer along with Jews to during the wars to end all wars rather than escape. The instrumental logic here is they realized it was not only anti-Semitic and escapist to leave Jews behind to perish, but also and most importantly, because they increasingly see themselves as proto-Israelis and proto-Jews who are to suffer with them.

of the "nation" (Krishna, 1996; Calhoun, 2001; Agnew, 2008). My argument is consistent with theories that understand the nation as a social text. If we take this limited taxonomy of performance binding nationalism, then there emerges a type of nationalism among Christian Zionists. This is a nationalism understood as the performance of Christian Zionist traits of cohesion, heritage, and a destiny of the nation. It is cemented in selective interpretations of the Old Testament that imagine Israel as a redemptive national territory. Christian Zionists practice a particular form of disaporic nationalism that challenges notions of nationalist exclusivity. Christian Zionists can instead be described as performing an *ethno-religious* nationalism. This unique brand of nationalism emerges from American social, economic, ethnic, and racial anxieties, and forces us to reconsider how nationalism, religion, and space can be conceived together.

Anthony Smith (2003) makes the argument that proto-nationalisms based on religious and ethnic groupings, what he calls "ethnies," pre-existed and pre-disposed the Western world to modern nationalism. Smith is not arguing that nationalism is an ancient phenomenon, rather he was arguing that there are kinds of proto-nationalisms that shared certain myths and rituals with modern nationalisms, specifically an origin and descent story traced to a place. What is of interest here is Smith's concept of an elect people as a chosen people with a Covenant (Lev 19-21; Duet 29: 14-15) that guide and construct an identity from laws and myths that set them apart from other ethnicities. The Old Testament argues that through Israel all other nations are blessed by their light (Isa 42:6-7) thus theoretically connecting the "Goyim" to the Jewish nation. Modern nationalisms certainly pull from ancient texts as empirical, however specious, examples of their nation arching back to a dark and misty past. Smith argues that there was a premodern

foundation of the idea of special territory and a cosmic worldview. There is a territorialization of memories where collective memories are handed down about events and people in places. Smith argues that this is a process of the territorialization of memory from a specific religious tradition of salvation, but not from "religion" into a wider social (or Durkheimian) sense, or from some kind of religious tradition. This is different from the modernists. Rather Smith emphasizes long-term popular values, symbols, and traditions of sacred land which are taken up in the modern period and given new political dimensions, what he calls "deep cultural resources" (Smith 134, 165, and 254, respectively).

Smith outlines four kinds of religion based proto-nationalist cultural resources: (1) myth of ethnic election; (2) attachment of terrains as sacred; (3) yearning to recover the spirit of a golden age; and (4) regenerative powers of sacrifice to ensure glorious destiny. All of the above relate to Christian Zionism because their discourse and performance of religious nationalism stress that both Jews and Christians have been Chosen to reclaim sacred territory given to them in a Covenant with God which will result in an imminent return of Christ who will redeem them in Holy glory. Many nationalisms imagine themselves in these terms and this suggests that religion is often an imbricating factor in nationalist identifications. While often employed to make the argument for a "religious nationalism," Smith's analytical ideal-type argument for early foundations for nationalism is not argued here. Rather, I deny the primordial continuity suggested by Smith. Rather, nationalisms are emergent for a variety of economic, political, and socio-spatial reasons that performativity cherry-pick historical resources to justify irredentist claims. Therefore, Christian Zionism is not an inevitable theological outcome, but is

rather performative within the socio-spatial, political, and economic milieu of the present. Therefore, Smith's (2003, p. 254) analytic foundation is used here to illustrate the ways claims to "sacred foundations" and "deep cultural resources" are selectively pulled from the past and performed as authentic representations of Jewish and, co-constitutionally, Christian claims to Israel and Palestine. Nationalism is then selectively built from pre-existing history but not in an inevitable and linear way. Rather it is a present performative re-making of nationalism that takes expression as a diaspora religious nationalism (Derrida, 1977; Butler, 1997).

Religion-based diaspora nationalism

A significant amount of recent literature has focused on diasporic or extra-territorial forms of nationalism (Anderson, 1983; Brubaker, 2005). Diasporas are often the most extreme and unwavering nationalisms (Herb, 1999 p. 20). Christian Zionists are not a classical diaspora-based "nation." Nevertheless, they share a common basic definition as a group of people living outside of a territory for which they claim *irridenta* rights, restoration commitments, and heritage. Their claims are based on myths and memories of a perceived "homeland," many of which are imagined through the prism of the Bible. Conventionally, diasporas refer to having a sustained connection to a homeland and keeping ethnic and cultural community in place. It is commonly argued that there are three elements of any diaspora: (1) dispersion through space; (2) orientation to a homeland; and (3) boundary-maintenance within a larger polity (Safan, 1991). These definitional limits taken, Brubaker (2005, 3) rightly argues that rather than categorize "a diaspora" as a cultural fact, a diaspora should be approached through the stances,

projects, claims, idioms, and practices of those who identify themselves as "dispersed in space." In the final section, I provide a case study comprising of Christian Zionist discourses regarding how they imagine themselves to be a religious nationalism in diaspora despite living in America. I will also examine their performances of an American "civic" constitution-based nationalism. It is this imagination and performed identification that allows Christian Zionists to have a diasporic national self-image.

Foon (1986) argues that people can have a loyalty to two different ethnic groups and have two nationalisms because they serve two different functions. Much modern cultural theory suggests that harboring two conflicting ideas of "nation" is not necessarily caustic or competing (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992). Following Gupta and Ferguson (1992), there is no isomorphic parallel overlap between categories of identity, religion, ethnicity, nation, and place. They write, "if we question a pre-given world of separate and discrete 'peoples and cultures,' and see instead a difference-producing set of relations, we turn from a project of juxtaposing preexisting differences to one of exploring the construction of difference to one of exploring the construction of differences in historical process" (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, p. 16). Gupta and Ferguson (1992, p. 12) seek to make this clear through the American example, a diverse state and set of nationalisms, which calls into question these very categories. While there is an assumed overlapping of ethnicity, nationalism, territory, and religion, identities are more complicated, less austerely categorized, and territorially blurred of the bounded assumptions we wish to impose on them (Agnew, 1994).

Gabriel Sheffer (2003, p. 232-233) distinguishes between "total," "dual," and "divided" diaspora loyalties. For Christian Zionists, their religious nationalism is

committed to God first, and America second, and therefore rejects Sheffer's analytical

gradient because of the narrow definition of loyalty attributed to the state.[7] However, the

echelon is not static or stable; it is the result of performative contingencies that have

defined their modern identities. As such, the Christian Zionist love for Israel is a religious

commitment based on future imagined history that sees a moral, religious, economic, and

political decline in the United States and an ascendency of these attributes in Israel until

the culmination of the Rapture.[8] For example, John Hagee, a major Christian Zionist

figure who heads a megachurch in San Antonio Texas and Chairs the charitable

organization and Israeli lobby *Christians United for Israel*, has been clear concerning the

moral, political, and religious position of the United States. Hagee writes: "the laws of

God transcends the laws of the United States government and the U.S. State Department"

(quoted in Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007, p. 150). In other words, in so far as the United

States plays a role in this script, it is to support and protect Israel. In his 2006 book

Jerusalem Countdown: A Warning to the World, Hagee suggests former President George

W. Bush's support for Israel "fulfills a biblical injunction to protect the Jewish state"

which is leading to "a pivotal role in the second coming" (Hagee, 2006, p. 22).

Ethno-religious vs. civic nationalism

Understanding the distinction between "civic" and "ethnic" nationalism is essential to

grasping the meaning of the ethno-religious nationalism of the Christian Zionist

movement. Both Brubaker and Smith make distinctions between civic and ethnic

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[7] In a recent poll, 42 percent of Christians saw themselves as Christian first and American second (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2006, p. 3).

[8] Decline is in part a deviation from the "fundamentals" of Christian America, including issues of darwinist thought, ethnic diversity, megacities, liberal bible scholarship, industrial society, feminism, abortion, and other culture wars issues.

nationalism (Smith, 2003; Brubaker, 1992). The concept of American civic nationalism—otherwise referred to as the "American creed," which is based on democratic and enlightenment beliefs upon which the American Constitution is founded— is alive and well and continues to bind Christian Zionists to the American state and people. Nevertheless it is thought to be under attack by a broad spectrum of culturally conservative Americans giving way to the so called "culture wars." For Christian Zionists, this eroding of this civic nationalism is thought to be a sign of the End Times.

Like French civic nationalism, American nationalism is largely assimilationist not pluralist. Therefore, while based demographically on immigration, it has a nativist expectation for conversion to the American creed. This is an especially poignant observation when that creed is imagined to be founded in a mythologized Jewish and Christian synergy, that is, Judeo-Christian (Kazin & McCartin, 2006). This mix of Protestantism and Enlightenment thought has been called "civil religion" in the United States (Bellah, 1976). However, Lieven (2004) argues that what he calls the American nationalist "Antithesis" or ethnic nationalism - a sometimes competing form of American nationalism - co-exists with civic nationalism, but has its roots in ethno-religious beliefs and Jacksonian ideals. While this latter form of nationalism is often subordinate to civic nationalism, it can rise to prominence in times of crisis. Imaginations of an imminent apocalypse and being an embattled minority, coupled with the belief that Israel and Jews are being persecuted globally, provide such crisis mentality. The imminence of the apocalypse is all the more heightened when juxtaposed against a perceived common enemy of the U.S. and Israel: Islam (Sturm, 2010).

It is this form of ethno-religious nationalism that Benedict Anderson predicted to be "the wave of the future," one consisting of "ethnic and racial stereotypes, xenophobia, sectarian 'multiculturalism' and the more brutal forms of identity politics" (Anderson, 1996, p. 12-13). For Lieven (2006, p. 6), in his condemnation of America's support for Israel's radical right, it is this ethno-religious nationalism that cements "America's attachment to Israel, [where] ethno-religious factors have become dominant, with extremely dangerous consequences for the war on terror." What distinguishes ethno-religious nationalism from other cultural identities is not only its territorial and political dimensions and ideals, but also its commitment to the pursuit of authenticity (however mythical) of the heritage and destiny of the imagined national community.

Territory and Apocalypse: Israel and Palestine as Alpha then Omega

Countless sentiments of devotion comprise nationalism, but territory and a geopolitical imagination of it are key, especially in contrast to common enemies and neighboring territories. Agnew argues (2008), that nationalist binaries, e.g. "internal" and "external," or "our nation" and "their nation," make nationalism the most territorial of socialist, liberal, and nationalist ideologies. Similarly, Herb and Kaplan (1999, p. 2) argue that "territory becomes a vital constituent of the definition and identification of the group living within it."

Visions of an imminent apocalypse have provided binding territorial exceptionalism many times throughout history, from Munster in 1534-35 to the English Puritans who migrated to New England. The latter marks the beginnings of what historian Stephen Stein (quoted in Boyer, 1992, p. 68) calls "the Americanization of the

apocalyptic tradition." The Puritans serve here as a brief example of a millennial attachment to place. As Avihu Zakai explains of the Puritan reverence with America's shores, Puritan

> attitudes towards [New England] space according to eschatology and apocalyptic visions, or according to prophetic imagination… [led to a] desacralization of England as a scared place in providential history, [this] reveals their geoeschatologic and geoapocalyptic awareness that England was not elect but rather represented apostasy within the course of the history of salvation. And geoeschatolic and geoapocalyptic consciousness gives evidence as well of the sacralization of an alternative place within the eschatology and apocalyptic drama of salvation and redemption (Zakai, 1992, p. 72).

Within this quote we can discern that England was, prior to migration, seen as sacred space, but that sacredness was eventually moved to New England (Zakai, 1992, p. 74). The New England Puritan interpretation of America's shores, as Sacvan Bercovitch (1978, p. 41-42) succinctly argued, turned "geography into eschatology." This story of cleansing the Puritans and Yankees in the waters of the Atlantic is a powerful one in American national identification, and one that continues to set America apart, not merely by distance from Europe, but by moral absolutes as to the uniqueness of being "born-again" as American and Christian (Hughes, 2003).

Christian Zionist territorial identification with Israel differs from both Puritan identification with America as the New Jerusalem and the post-Civil War American peripatetic fascination with Palestine. Post-Civil War America was fascinated by Palestine, casting its eyes past the American horizon for the first time in a generation

(Vogel, 1993). One mid-19th century Methodist Episcopal bishop and pilgrim to Palestine, Henry White Warren, for example, reminisced that "This [Palestine] is the first country where I have felt at home" (Quoted in Davis, 1996, p. 16). Palestine became at this time not only an origin myth but also a moral guide.

Post-Civil War American protestant fascination with Palestine
It is important to first flesh out this story of the 19th century "Holy Land Mania" to contrast the modern Christian Zionist reverence for Israel with the post- Civil War American obsession with Palestine (Obinzinger, 1999). The 19th century American pilgrimage to Palestine's landscapes was one of self-imagination and renewal after the deep and divisive scars of the American Civil War (Vogel, 1993). The thought was that if Palestine could be restored as sacred space, so too could America. As Obinzinger argues, "travel to Palestine allowed Americans to read sacred geography…. While the persistent preoccupations with the Bible and biblical geography stood at the ideological core of American colonial expansion, actual travel to Palestine allowed Americans to contemplate biblical narratives at their source in order to reimagine—and even to reenact—ethno-religious national myths, allowing them, ultimately, to displace the biblical Holy land with the American New Jerusalem" (Obinzinger, 1999, p. 5). Palestinian landscapes were, therefore, sacred spaces and the medium for *American* national self-definition for Protestants as a reminder of a morally pure beginnings.

In the 19th century both Palestine and America were thought of as the twin cradles of civilization, where Palestine marked the alpha—the beginning—American marked the omega—the millennial destiny (Stephanson, 1995). By "Alpha and Omega" I do not

mean Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:8), but rather this binary serves as an illustrative allegory for sacred space-time: the sacred space of the beginning (Alpha) and the sacred space of the end (Omega). What makes the contemporary American Christian Zionist experience so interesting is that rather than reaffirming an *American* national identity, pilgrimage to Israel challenges that identity. Christian Zionists today increasingly are coming to see America as the moral antipode of a Jewish Israeli nation that fuses future redemption with a present (but adopted) nation. Israel, as we will see below, is emergent as both Alpha and Omega.

Christian Zionists are largely disillusioned with the assumption of God's divine providence attached to America as a new terrestrial space to live out a God given holy life. Playing on Hal Lindsey's (1971) best-selling book of doom, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Mark Hitchcock (2010), for example, has entitled his recent book with a more specific national focus, *The Late Great United States*. In it Hitchcock details the inevitable decline of the United States, the ascendant prominence of Israel, and the imminent prophecies to take place there. Similarly, Victor Mordecai, a Messianic Jew who is well known in Evangelical circles for his adamant anti-Islamic thought, argued that "Christianity is going out of style in America in favor of ethnic diversity represented by many immigrant groups and other faiths." There is a "fading Judeo-Christian ethic in American," as the title of his article laments. America is in decline then, not just economically or politically, but at its ethical core. Mordecai's core values are biblically based, this is what he means by a "Judeo-Christian" foundation: one that has seen, as he points out, Muslims outnumber Jews four to one in America. Those who are to blame for this undercutting of America's foundation via Muslim immigration are those who support

progressive politics. He writes, "Obama represents a synthesis of Muslim and ultra-left radicalism of the 1960s, both of which are inimical to the values of Judeo-Christian America and Israel" (Mordecai. 2010, p. 12; cf. Dittmer, 2010). As Grace Halsell also observed of the disenchantment of the American West for apocalyptic forms of Christianity, "since the 'frontier' of America is gone, they seek to recreate it elsewhere" (Halsell, 1986, p. 113-114). This perception of decline is not endemic to Christian Zionists alone, indeed most Americans have perceived America on moral decline since the end of the Second World War (Brown, 2012).

19th century Palestine was not interpreted in alterity, but in a continuity that linked an origin story to Palestine - instead of Europe - and, therefore, to the material landscapes of the Bible. Therefore once solely the Alpha marking only an origin story, or what Smith termed "sacred foundations," Israel is now largely perceived as both the space of Alpha and Omega (Smith, 2003, p. 254). The modern phenomenon is a Christian Zionist attempt to make Americans into Israelis, not Palestine into America. This enabled by the Christian Zionist's acceptance of an apocalyptic vision of the future and a religious adoption of Jews as legitimate biblical actors. 19th century Palestine was not interpreted in alterity, but in a continuity that linked an origin story to Palestine - instead of Europe - and, therefore, to the material landscapes of the Bible. Therefore once solely the Alpha marking only an origin story, or what Smith termed "sacred foundations," Israel is now perceived as both the space of Alpha and Omega (Smith, 2003, p. 254). John Nelson Darby, the inventor of the Rapture and dispensationalism, did see the Jews as the chosen earthly people, but he wasn't a Zionist (Sandeen, 1970). Darby did not believe that there could be a Jewish return to the Promised Land which would be a fulfilment of prophecy

before the Rapture. He believed the next event in prophecy to be the Rapture itself. The Zionist innovation in premillennial dispensationalism has been to move from a strict futurist position to a modified historicism by arguing that 1948 was predicted in the Bible. Even in 1948, lots of dispensationalists did not believe it was. But the revised 1967 Scofield Bible popularized the notion that Israel was God-given, prophetic sacred space and that Israeli Jews were the Chosen People of Earth whose return identified in the Bible was a sign of Christ's imminent return (Boyer 158).

Nevertheless, for most in the first 20th century, Evangelical imaginations Jews were often fraught with anti-Semitism that saw Jews serving an instrumental role in the End Times which culminated in a second Holocaust (Barkun, 2010; Weber, 2004; Boyer, 1992; Cohen, 1979). Indeed the influential anti-Semetic fabrication, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, suggested the mark of the beast was Jewish control of global finance and trade. Immigrant Jews were highly suspect, and even Franklin D. Roosevelt was disparagingly labeled a Jew for opening diplomatic relations with the USSR (Dittmer, 2010). A populist envisioning of America as founded on a "Judeo-Christian" tradition emerged in political parlance as early as the 1930s in relation to the rise of Communism (Silk, 1986; Sturm, 2012), and Israel's Muslim neighbors were increasingly seen as an emergent enemy of the Christian West. The prophecy that Jews would return to Israel and expand it to the biblical meets and bounds, gave way to the view that Jews were the Chosen People of the Earth. Thus unlike the 19th century Christian pilgrims to Palestine who were "friends of the Jews," the president of the International Christian Embassy in

Jerusalem recently redefined them as being "full partners in fulfilling His eternal promises to re-gather His beloved people" (Bühler, 2008, p. 53).[9]

Post-1967 making of Judeo-Evangelical nationalism

With the Six-Day War of 1967 and growing Arab hostility against Israel throughout the mid-20th century, Christian Zionists increasingly focused on the role of Israel within the prophetic End Times scenario.[10] The major sea-change came with the 1967 war that saw the unlikely defeat of Arab forces by a much smaller Israeli army. The occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had a convincing affect on American Evangelicals that major prophetic events were taking place in the Middle East. These events marked the beginning of their national shift and territorial identity toward Israel.

Cohn-Sherbok (2000) points to America's bicentennial year, 1976, as a time when several issues coalesced to reinvigorate Christian Zionism. These issues included the outgrowing of mainstream Protestantism, the election of born-again southern Jimmy Carter, and the election of Menachem Begin as Prime Minister of Israel (Cohn-Sherbok, 2000, p. 165). American Christian Zionism became more involved in federal politics as well for many reasons that culminate coincidentally at this time (Bruce, 1988). It is in part the perceived decline of American Christian values that brought voters to the polls on issues of abortion, prayer in schools, intelligent design, homosexuality, the spread of 'liberal humanism,' and the more recent example of stem cell research.

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[9] This emergent transition has been witnessed by the author from a near decade long ethnography with Christian Zionist pilgrims in Israel and Palestine. This paper, however, relies discourse analysis of secondary statements and texts from many of the most influential voices from with the Christian Zionist movement. There are, however, many anti-Semitic voices from within the movement which contest this emergent performance of religious nationalism for Israel and Israeli Jews.

[10] Koeing (2006), for example, correlates selective American catastrophes as God's punishment to moments in history when American support for Israel waned or when America pressured Israel toward a resolution over the Palestinian occupied territories (see Clark, 2007: 252-55).

The values voter was originally mobilized by televangelists including: Pat Robertson, progenitor of the Conservative Coalition and voice of the 700 Club; Jerry Falwell, the founder of the Moral Majority; and Tim LaHaye, founder of the American Coalition for Traditional Values and co-author of the *Left Behind* novel series. These three men, in the revival of southern and conservative Christian voter bloc, coalesced around the "return" of so-called "Judeo-Christian" values.[11] They also renewed American Christian interest in pilgrimage to Israel and Palestine.

Central to this history is the beginnings of the "Judeo-Evangelical" relationship that brought together political and religious leaders in America and Israel, and Evangelical congregations and tourism money followed (Chafets, 2008).[12] The mid-20th century roots of this Judeo-Evangelical relationship can be traced to Oral Roberts and Billy Graham, both of whom were particularly supportive of the Israeli state. In particular, Roberts laid the foundation for future Evangelical leaders to approach and be approached by every Israeli Prime Minister beginning with David Ben Gurion. Ben Gurion, while known as a secular Zionist who rarely enetered synagogue, met and allegedly "prayed" with Roberts in 1959 (Segev, 1998; Goldman, 2011). Despite his secular ethos, Gurion recognized the political and economic support of Christian Zionists. He helped facilitate the Sixth World Conference of Pentecostal Churches to take place in Jerusalem in 1961. There, he courted their beliefs, "[in Israel] today we are privileged to

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[11] Institutionally, the movement found a voice in the American political landscape in the early 1970s, but its language and ideology emerged much earlier (cf. Lichtman, 2008; Dochuk, 2011). That said, the interest in Jews and Judaism was a relatively recent post-World War II emphasis employed by the American conservative political right. Revisionist histories by cultural conservatives and especially culturally and theologically conservative Evangelicals has become a mainstay of reinventing the American tradition. See for example, Catherine Millard's book, *The Rewriting of America's History* (1991), which as its title suggests, "is dedicated to the glorious truth that this nation was established upon biblical principles: its founders were men of Christian nobility" (Millard, 1991, p. iv).

[12] Chafets (2008) first makes this hyphenation, "Judeo-Evangelical" (but on Jewish ethnic inclusivity, see also Ariel, 2000; Diamond, 1996; Ehrenhaus & Owen, 2004; Noll, 2008).

see the fulfillment of the prophecy and promise of the Bible" (Goldman, 2011, p. n.p.).

Jerry Falwell's relationship with Menachem Begin, Prime Minister of Israel from 1977 to

1983, has often been credited with being the relationship that led post-World War II

American Evangelicals to acknowledge the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip

as prophetic events. Begin was the first Israeli PM to openly support American

Evangelical tourism to the "Holy Land" and Falwell's ministries brought pilgrims by the

thousands (Harding, 2000). In 1980, Falwell became the first non-Jew to be awarded the

Jabotinsky medal for Zionist excellence (Cohn-Sherbok, 2006, p. 162).

The relationship between the rise of Israeli right wing politicians and the Christian

Right in America has coterminous parallels related to the settlement movement and the

1967 and 1973 Israeli wars (Bruce, 1990; Lienesch, 1993). Ehud Spirnzak (1991) points

out that Israel's radical right began to gain political clout in 1967 by defining the

occupied territories as part of biblical *Eretz Yisrael.* The messianism of the Israeli radical

right, largely under leadership of Rabbi Rav Kook and his *Gush Emunim* settlement

movement, was made possible by defining the secular state of Israel as a messianic

means toward territorial maximalism (Deuternonmy 7:1-23) (Nyroos, 2001).[13]

The Israeli and Palestinian landscape of *Gush Emunim* took on a millennial

significance that differed from the German romantic landscape vision of Labour Zionist

settlers (Friedland & Hecht, 2000). The former believed that possession, both visual and

physical, was essential to the performance of a prophetic national identity. As Weizman

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[13] Almost 900 years later Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the early 20th-century thinker respected by most
Orthodox Jews and revered by Religious Zionists, had similar sentiments. Like Maimonides, Kook saw
Christianity as akin to idolatry, writing that "with Christianity and its concepts one should share nothing,
not even what seems good or beneficial… It is only by distancing oneself from Christian concepts, and by
implementing the absolute refusal to gain any benefit from that world of ideas, that our own intellects and
sense of self will become purer and stronger" (Goldman, 2011).

(2007, p. 135) eloquently explains, "for most settlers, the landscape was not initially much more than a pastoral view, but for the ideologists of Gush Emunim, its topographical features were cast as national metaphors. A constructed way of seeing sought to re-establish the relation between terrain and sacred text." For Christian Zionists, the proxy possession of landscape through their perceived national peers is essential to the production of their own Judeo-Evangelical nationalism. Therefore Christian Zionists have supported the "national religious" settler movement, whether they like it or not, in the quest for territorial maximalism.

This definition gave agency to many orthodox Jews who had previously thought that Israel could only be founded by the hand of God. Israel's capture of the Golan Heights, Gaza, and the West Bank in 1967 suggested to many that God's hand was working through secular agents. For this burgeoning movement, settling these newly won territories was a self-fulfilling prophecy that would result in the return of the messiah (Sprinzak, 1991). The Israeli settler movement or "national religious" have facilitated the Judeo-Evangelical relationship as it relates to the occupation of territory and the exclusion of Palestinians. These expanded borders that now include Palestine have come to redefine the Israeli nation. Challenging those borders by suggesting a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict, for example, is understood to be synonymous with challenging the sanctity and integrity of the nation itself, and, more importantly, God's prophetic work.

This national "cartographic anxiety" of losing sacred territory is a motivating factor for most Christian Zionist pilgrims and is a rallying call for their political and economic efforts in Israel and America (Krishna, 1996). As a poignant example, the

televangelist pastor John Hagee openly contributes millions of dollars in Christian Zionist donations to settler movements.[14] Pat Robertson, once said while interviewing Gershon Solomon (leader of the Temple Mount Faithful, a group focused on the building of the Third Temple) in 1991 that "we will never have peace until the mount of the House of the Lord is restored" (quoted in Ariel, p. 153-154). *The International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem's* founding principle, for example, is to affirm Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank.[15]

Judeo-Evangelical tradition and the exclusion of Islam

European Christians often saw Jews the "outsiders within" and Muslims as the "outsiders outside" (Buchanan & Moore, 2003, p. 7). The latter's presence defined the territorial limits of a Christian Europe. The most recent and obvious catalyzing event to demonize Muslims was 11 September 11 2001. This event seemed to provide evidence for Samuel Huntington's then failing "clash of civilizations" thesis as well as the dualistic foundations of apocalyptic Christianity.[16] This is symptomatic of a wider practice of how religious categories are grafted onto racial ones generally (Sturm, 2010).[17] Muslims

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[14] John Hagee estimates that in 2009 alone, he contributed $58 million. Hagee's support for settlements has resulted in a sports arena being named after him in the Jewish West Bank settlement of Ariel (Rutenberg, Mcintire & Bronner, 2010).

[15] A common meme among ex-pat Christian Zionists living in Israel, for example, is that Ariel Sharon's coma was God's punishment for removing settlers from Gush Katif.

[16] I say failing because of the vast amount of literature celebrating the 200th anniversary of Kant's perpetual peace (Habermas, 1997).

[17] Race is thought to be descended from particular biblical individuals whose characteristics are generalized across whole "races" and "nations." For example, Arabs are thought to be the heirs of Abraham's cast-out son Ishmael, while Isaac is taken as the patriarch of the Jews. Abraham's cast-out son Ishmael is thought to have begat Arabs, and his son Isaac, Jews for which the former is not only subservient to the latter as the preferred son, but was also given the Covenant to Israel. Furthermore, the descendants of Noah's son Ham are thought to be Africans and his son Japheth are thought to be Europeans and, therefore, ancestral Americans. These generalizations are then used to make stereotypical character judgments, justify prejudice assumptions concerning social standing, and associate whole continents of people as either "evil" or "good" (See Dittmer 2010; Han 2010; Sturm 2010).

through immigration have become the threat to the Judeo-Christian tradition inside and are the threat outside. In this way, post-Cold War prophecy adopted, informed, and inflamed these binary qualifications between American Evangelicals and Arab Muslims, rendering both sides into divisive geopolitical halves.

There is a broader history of this focus on Islam and the Middle East in prophetic events, which I have argued contributes to the *raison d'être* for Christian Zionist religious nationalism for Israel. The geopolitical focus of national Othering has shifted from the "Evil" character of Communist "Russia" during the Cold War to that of the Muslim Middle East in the post-Cold War period. Hal Lindsey (1970, p. 59), *The late Great Planet Earth*, claimed that "Russia is a Gog." He takes his evidence not simply from the American Cold War fervour, but also from Israel when he quotes Israeli General Moshe Dayan (1915-1981) that "the next war will not be with Arabs, but with Russians" (Lindsey 1970, p. 59). Similarly, Tim LaHaye (1974, p. 73) gave reasons why Russia and not the Middle East was a harbinger sign of the End Times: "the present Middle East crisis is not…predicted for the end time [because] Egypt, a prominent ally of Russia today, is not listed in the group." This is all placed in stark contrast to both Lindsey and LaHaye's later focus on the coming Islamic invasion. For example, Lindsey (2002, p. 235) wrote in 2002 that "the last war will begin with a coordinated attack against Israel by the Iranian led Muslim forces joined by Russia". The invasion is no longer led by Russia; instead it is "joined" by Russia and led by "Muslim forces."

This regional shift from the Soviet Union to the Middle East was a gradual one, beginning with the 1973 oil crisis and later with the Iranian Revolution. The shift was no doubt influenced by Walvoord's 1974, *Armageddon: Oil and the Middle East Crisis*,

which outlines the rising power of the Middle East and Muslims in particular. Walvoord, was the president of the Dallas Theological Seminary, where Lindsey obtained a Th.M.. Walvoord observed what he called "Russia's Downfall," arguing that the "dramatic realignment of political and economic power on the international scene is already in the making…The power of Arab oil and European agriculture and industry may lead to a cartel that will eventually eclipse the power of both Russia and the United States in the Middle East" (Walvoord 1974, p. 125 and 20). Prophecy books increasingly emphasized Islam as evil in these times.

Most, however, shifted their analysis to new geographical spheres, mainly the Islamic Middle East, after the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Unlike Lindsey whose prophecy centered on Russia, another prophecy scholar, Mark Hitchcock (2002, p. 32), thought the geopolitics was clearly about: "Muslims, Muslims, and More Muslims." This idea would later be shared by others, including the *Left Behind* series founders, LaHaye and Jenkins. *Left Behind*, a series that has sold more than sixty-million copies in ten-years, locates the Antichrist Nicolae Carpathia's Roman Empire head-quarters in the New Babylon in Iraq (LaHaye and Jenkins 1996). In his book, *The Coming Islamic Invasion of Israel* (2002), Hitchcock (2002, p. 33) outlines what he calls God's "Top-Ten Most Wanted List." He compares it to President George W. Bush's "axis of evil", suggesting they "all have one thing in common: Islam."

David Campbell, in his insightful work *Writing Security* (1998), illustrates how recycled fears of the Other can be powerful tools in keeping a moral order. The fear for and attachment to Israel, as a nation to be defended until the apocalypse, serves a similar function. It shores up and cements a moral national order (Northcott 2004, p. 10 and 17-

20). However, fear of Muslims for the premillennialist is a form of security and not an inculcation of insecurity. The battle between "us" and "them" is bound in dramatic irony. Hitchcock (2003, p. 170) explains that "no matter how troubled we are, no matter how dark this world looks, we can know one thing beyond all doubt. We win." War does not create a climate of anxiety, it takes up the Old World vision of stasis toward a New World future: it is a theatre to be embraced. War is embraced because of the certainty that "we" – by which he means Israeli Jews and American Evangelicals - "win" because of the certainty afforded by their prophetic geopolitical analysis.

There have been many examples where powerful government representatives, from Presidents to members of Congress, have not only tried to redefine American history in favor of a "Judeo-Christian" foundation narrative, but have also tried to influence American foreign policy in favor of a "Judeo-Evangelical" relationship with Israel specifically with regard to territory. James Inhofe, Oklahoma Senator and Christian Zionist, in a speech to the Senate in 2002 entitled, "Seven Reasons Why Israel is Entitled to the Land," makes it clear that Israel has *irredenta* rights to all land West of the Euphrates river up to the Mediterranean Sea including the Sinai Peninsula (Rossing, 2004, p. 52-53). More recently, Michele Bachmann, Sarah Palin, Rick Perry, and Mike Huckabee stated that Israel should not give up Palestinian occupied territories because it was biblically promised to Jews (Lizza, 2011; Kalman, 2009). On a recent pilgrimage to Israel, Huckabee told the *New Yorker* that a two-state solution would not happen "on the same piece of real estate" (Levy, 2010, p. n.p.). Rather, the Palestinians, whom he denies legitimate nationality, are strictly an Arab problem. He was also quoted expressing his "Judeo-Evangelical" nationality saying, "I worship a Jew!... I have a lot of Jewish

friends, and they're kind of, like, 'You Evangelicals love Israel more than we do.' I'm, like, 'Do you not get it? If there weren't a Jewish faith, there wouldn't be a Christian faith!'" This territorial identification with Israel and the national ethno-religious identification with Jews is one set against a racialized exclusion of Arabs and Islam.

The national division of insider and outsider can take dramatic shifts in times of geopolitical change (Agnew, 2003). But most interesting is a new religious identification that sees Jews as not just a question of a shared text, values or tradition, something that in and of itself is difficult for most American Protestants to relate to, but also the genealogy that often took on a tone of family, blood, and race that excludes some in favor of others. Jews were rewritten into God's contemporary interventions in history. The proof was the reestablishment of Israel, including God's clear territorial sovereignty and protection of it (Goldman, 2011). Jews became once again the people of the Book and took on a transcendent role for the redemption of all Christians. In other words, Jews became insiders.

Central to this definition of inside/outside is where Christian Zionist national allegiances are placed. Common among Christian Zionists is the assumption that dissention or criticism of Israel is synonymous with criticizing God: Israel is God's work. Indeed, today, for Christian Zionists, America still holds a moral voice and is respected as a homeland for purposes of civic or constitutional nationalism. This civic nationalism, as illustrated above however, takes second place to the imagined moral light of Israel and Jews. The foreign policy of Israel is infallible and inerrant while American foreign policy is sinful if it challenges Israeli policy. Israel always trumps America. William Koenig, a former third-party presidential candidate on the Christian Right, has recently published

two books in which he argued that both Hurricane Katrina and September 11, 2001 were God's responses to wavering American support for Israel. Koenig's book, *Eye to Eye* (2006), argues that all recent history of major catastrophes on American soil were God's vengeance against the US for asking Israel to arrange a peace plan with Palestine. Koenig's book succinctly captures what he believes is an undeniable correlation, rather than coincidence and selective history:

> What do these major record-setting events have in common? The ten costliest insurance events in U.S. history; The twelve costliest hurricanes in U.S. history; Three of the four largest tornado outbreaks in U.S. history; The two largest terrorism events in U.S. history. All of these major catastrophes and many others occurred or began on the very same day or within 24-hours of U.S. presidents Bush, Clinton and Bush applying pressure on Israel to trade her land for promises of "peace and security," sponsoring major "land for peace" meetings, making major public statements pertaining to Israel's covenant land and /or calling for a Palestinian state…. [The Bible states] 'And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem' (Zechariah 12:9) (Koenig, 2006, p. 1).

The feeling among Christian Zionists is that America is in moral, economic, and political decline. At times, America itself becomes the enemy of Judeo-Evangelical nationalism. Unlike the 19th century American pilgrims seeking to cleanse the morality of their American nation in Palestine, Christian Zionists today understand Israel as being the new millennial promise while America is irrevocably lost as a moral guide. Israel is now both Alpha and Omega.

Conclusion

Susan Harding (2000) argues that Christian Zionists read history backwards, from the future to the present. The Christian Zionist national identification to Israel and Jews is grounded in an eschatological narrative of the future. They know what is *going to happen*, just as the mythical histories presented as the heritage of the Judeo-Christian Tradition present *what happened*. As one scholar of eschatology put it, Christian Zionism is an ethno-religious national identity that is framed by anticipation for a "future history" (Schussler, 1985, p. 40).

Christian Zionists are motivated by an apocalyptic vision that co-constitutionally performs Israel and their Judeo-Evangelical nationalism with politically consequential implications for the future of America and Israel/Palestine. This hyphenation between Jews and Christians is a spatial relationship. It poses that if Israel can be possessed through law, colonialism, and performative definition, then so too can the credentials of truth and faith be possessed, validated, and confirmed. In other words, the possession of territory equates to a possession of truth. Such broad Christian Zionist eschatological expectations are often performed with little variation where deviation from eschatologically discursive norms as to an alternative future is anathema to maintaining deep attachments to particular places and spiritual convictions.

I have argued above that this future orientation has led many American Evangelicals to develop a religion based diaspora nationalism. While instrumental to their expectation for the apocalypse, Israel and Israeli Jews have become a central part of their religion and their performance of it. This religion *as* nationalism concept is

contemplatable if we understand religion not from the position of doctrine and belief, but rather the performances of Christian Zionists. I argue that Christian Zionist nationalism is a new and emergent development. American Christian interest in Palestine in the post-bellum years up to the founding of Israel in 1948, was one of renewal, a return to the moral beginnings of their religion, nation, and society. But with the founding of the Israel State and the occupation of territory in 1967, American Evangelicals increasingly saw the wheels of prophecy turning, and Israeli Jews as central co-terminus actors in an imminent battle on Earth between good and evil. Centrally, this has led American Christian Zionist loyalty to begin to shift from America to Israel as they see America's conservative cultural values being eroded which signals the End Times, a phase of history where Israel is central to their eschatological concerns. Compounding the performance of apocalyptic imminence is the perception of Islam as the biblical evil hordes of Gog and Magog. The hyphenation of Judeo and Christian is key to developing a future, dualist memory dividing what is inside—"ours"—and outside—"theirs"—in often simplistic geopolitical divisions drawn up between Jews and Christians on the one hand, and everybody else—especially Muslims—on the other.

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