

FROM THE RIVER TO THE SEAPALESTINE ISSUE

Evangelical Zionism

Christian Zionism and the US political imaginary

TAD DELAY

Some years ago, I was a grad student on an archeological excavation. Northbound from Tel Aviv, gazing out a window, I saw a packed settlement stretching across the hills. A dig leader pointed. “Over there is the, um,” she paused, unsure what to call them, “the territories.” She avoided the controversial word *Palestinian*.

At the Iron Age excavation site, I found pottery every minute of the day, occasionally some iron slag. But if we found human remains, we were instructed to use a pseudonym in case a passerby from town hears us: “do not say *bone*.” Orthodox concerns for Jewish graves meant human remains must be

reported to authorities, risking a pause in excavation. If followed to the letter, this rule renders archeology impossible. [1] But what counts as a distinctly Jewish bone when imaginary pasts—including, prominently, a Christian biblical one—overlay the land?

My archeological expedition is formative for many reasons, though given my present sympathies with the boycott movement it is one I cannot take again. On our dig, I remember local high school aged interns discussing their future in the IDF; I knew who they would kill. I was staying in a building with a safe room equipped with gas filtration; I see pervasive preparations for fighting. I learned how everyday Israeli infrastructure also served as state fortressing. Archeology programs, including the one I visited at the University of Haifa, contributed to the occupation by confiscating Palestinian antiquities and extending Israeli presence into Arab areas. I asked an Israeli staff member what she thought of American evangelicals who believe unconverted Jews will be damned to hell. She smiled and replied, “Evangelicals are Israel’s best friend.”

Most Zionists, by far, are Christians. Christian Zionists in Texas alone probably outnumber Jewish Zionists worldwide.[2] Admittedly, I am approximating here using the percentage of U.S. Christians and Jews who say Israel was given to the Jewish people by God (fifty-five percent and forty per-cent, respectively), and multiplying the number of Christians in Texas (seventy-seven percent of Texas’s thirty million people are Christian) by fifty-five percent to get nearly thirteen million Christians in Texas holding this Zionist belief. Given that only forty percent of U.S. Jews hold this same view, and given that Jews in the U.S. make up close to half the worldwide Jewish population, if we grant this admittedly crude approximation for Zionist belief in Christian and Jewish groups, this makes it likely that Texas has more Christian Zionists. Additionally, among white evangelicals, eighty-two percent agree God gave Israel to the Jewish people. I also acknowledge that this rough approximation cannot account for differences in intensity between forms of Zionism, since Christian Zionism is often a very passive, background element in Christian theology.

Sitting amid this background before a congressional hearing, Reagan’s secretary of the interior James G. Watt was asked if he would protect wildernesses for future generations. Watt replied, “I do not know how many future generations we can count on

before the Lord returns.” A normal American reaction. When I speak of the popular belief that we are living in the End Times, I hear either laughs in disbelief or, among those who grew up in that world, instant recognition. As a child, I doubt I knew many adults who *didn't* believe the world was ending. But how many Americans believe there will be a future? How does that belief intersect with the climate and other crises?

In 2010, Pew Research Center surveyed how many Americans believed Christ would return by 2050.[3] Forty-eight percent of Christians agreed (roughly four in ten Americans overall): Catholics (thirty-two percent), mainline Protestants (twenty-seven percent), and the religiously unaffiliated (20 percent) believed this with less frequency than white evangelicals (fifty-eight percent). Only a tenth of American Christians felt sure Christ would not return in this window. But Evangelicals are outliers. Only one in three Americans, while sixty-five percent of evangelicals, believe natural disasters are signs of the End Times.[4] Among those who expect Christ's return, seventy-three percent of evangelicals say the world will turn against Israel as we approach the rapture, and seventy-nine percent say violence in the Middle East signals the end (compared to forty-three percent of non-evangelical Christians).[5] While Americans are more than twice as likely as the global average to believe the end of the world is near, white evangelicals are nearly twice as likely as the average American: two-thirds of white evangelicals believe the end is near.

More recently, in 2022 Pew found thirty-nine percent of US adults believed “we are living in the end times,” as did sixty-three percent of evangelicals. Ninety-two percent of evangelicals believed Jesus would return to Earth someday, and twenty-one percent of evangelicals said it would happen in their lifetime.[6]

“Why is there psychic pleasure in imagining the world will end? How could they care about rising seas, or lose sleep over a genocide, if the feel of these events confirms their faith in the End Times?”

A few caveats. First, affirmative responses on a survey are not actual indicators of how fervently respondents believe, as if a survey were the singular voice of uncensored egos. My experience is that people care little about what they

believe and whether their beliefs are true. Conscious belief may not drive behavior and understanding. Second, loosely-held apocalypticism resonates with other future-denials, such as Wall Street's laser focus on only the next few financial quarters, a near rather than a far future. Finally, phrasing matters. "Will Christ come back by the end of the century?" triggers different anxieties than "Will Christ come back in your lifetime?"

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There is no singular Zionism in Jewish thought: there's the left-labor Zionism of David Ben-Gurion, liberal Zionism, revisionist Zionism, binational Zionism, a nakedly eliminationist Zionism, and more. But lurking in the background is a long tradition of Christian Zionism, one monomaniacally focused on Israel as a stage for the End Times. While the British landed in Palestine in the 1840s, Americans like William Miller and his acolytes predicted the return of Christ, while John Nelson Darby spread his discovery of a rapture. Innovative twists on older apocalypticism required, they believed, a reborn Jewish homeland (if not a Jewish state). Whereas many early twentieth century Orthodox Jewish communities saw a Jewish state as abandoning hope for a messiah to bring people out of exile, American Protestants saw the fulfillment of the messianic timeline. Christian apocalypticism begins in the first century with a sect expecting the imminent return of Christ, waxing and waning over the next two millennia. Even when eschatological predictions were slim, talk of converting Jews to Christianity is common when a reconstituted Jewish homeland appears in post-Reformation thought.

The roots of today's Christian Zionism extend at least as far back as the sixteenth century, especially in Calvinist traditions, but we must be cautious against projecting later theological innovation on previous times. When Luther spoke of an antichrist, it was the current pope—not a devil incarnate during a tribulation. Amid many apocalyptic movements in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the dream was often for a universal Protestant or Catholic Christendom rather than a millennial reign of Christ. Alongside seventeenth-century apocalypticisms alien to the modern Protestant—in a stew of supersessionism and anti-Semitism of the day—proto-Zionisms

emerged in Puritan and Calvinist traditions. For example, the 1560 Geneva Bible noted Romans 11:26—“The deliverer shall come out of Sion, and shall turn away the ungodliness from Jacob”—with an explanation that Jews would be gathered to the church. Protestants on both sides of the Atlantic increasingly incorporated Israel’s restoration into their theology.

Prolific Puritan clergyman Increase Mather, later president of Harvard College, argued that all twelve tribes would be restored in the land. In his 1669 book *The Mystery of Israel’s Salvation, Explained and Applied*, the precise time of Israel’s salvation could not be known.[7] This would require the fall of the Ottomans and Catholics alike, the latter due to Rome’s prominence in Revelation: “Before this salvation of Israel be accomplished, the Pope and Turk shall be overthrown and destroyed.” Further, Jews must convert to Christianity to achieve salvation: “When the Israelites shall be converted, they shall especially come forth out of the Eastern parts of the world.” The book obsesses over the race-mixing of Israelites with Europeans and how Israel’s reconstitution fits an eschatological timeline, but he clearly believed Jews will retake Palestine: “Yea, I am persuaded, that after the Israelites shall be in their own Land again, they shall be brought into the greatest distress that ever any people were in in [sic] this world.” Of course, before salvation is complete, the Pope and Turks shall rally against the Christian forces of Gentiles and Jews in a battle of Armageddon. Christian Zionism proliferated among Protestants in the early modern period, but by the eighteenth century, Christian Zionism was so wholly unremarkable that Napoleon invited Jews to return to the land of which he said they were legitimate heirs. Alongside the growing Industrial Revolution, as coeval phenomena of the nineteenth century, modern apocalypticism and modern anti-Semitism twinned Jewish emancipation and subsequent Christian backlash.

Millennialism proliferated in the nineteenth century with the idea of a thousand-year reign of Christ on Earth. In the United States, a Baptist-born, downwardly mobile ex-soldier named William Miller obsessively studied the scriptures until, in the 1820s, he became convinced the end would come in “about the year 1843,” from his twisted interpretation of a verse from the Book of Daniel 8:13–14. Hesitant to publicize such a claim, he waited until the 1830s to dedicate himself to this message full-time. He traveled about the northeast U.S. and Canada with a tent facilitating several thousand listeners—his claimed following of fifty thousand to one hundred thousand. By March

1844, he withdrew in disappointment. Chalking the miscalculation up to the Gregorian calendar, his acolyte Samuel S. Snow proposed a new date of October 22, 1844. Legend has it that followers sold their belongings and waited until morning for Christ's return. The episode was dubbed the Great Disappointment, and the sect rebranded as Seventh Day Adventists. Understand this: no amount of failed prophecy proves fatal to a prophetic agenda.

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To stare unflinchingly at a failed prophecy, without excuses or prevarications, might induce shame at wasted commitments. We will do anything to avoid shame. We prefer indifference. We wish to feel unbothered. We hope systems operate smoothly as predicted. But anxiety is a signal: something is not

working. When an ideological system cracks, we prefer the frantic activity of turmoil and anxiety if the alternative is shame. Shame might force a passage to the act, a genuine conversion or change in patterns. But turmoil and anxiety offer enjoyment through the symptomatic return of the repressed. If a failed prophecy can be converted into a new interpretation or postponed timeline, the subject bargains for more enjoyment and anchors the ego's enjoyment in failure. Let us excavate this ever-postponed failure which, for the Christian Zionist, stitches unrelentingly violent visions to quiet piety.



The more salient thread for our purposes is dispensationalism. In the fall and winter of 1827, the fiercely Calvinist Irish minister John Nelson Darby suffered a fall from a horse. During his recovery, he intensively studied the Bible's eschatology. These months are often said to be when he discovered the rapture. The terms “dispensationalism” or “dispensationalist” (a moniker Darby never took) were coined a century later. Simply put, a dispensational reading smooths out prophetic contradictions: the reconciliation of the Hebrew Bible's prophecies with the New Testament and Christ's return. There must be a second, second coming! Dispensationalism divides the Biblical timeline into seven epochs. In order, the

dispensations: Adam to the Fall; the Fall to the Flood; the Tower of Babel and earthly governments; the Patriarchs of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the Law given to Moses until the Crucifixion of Christ; the church age until the rapture and tribulation (our present dispensation); and finally, the Millennial Kingdom of Christ's rule on Earth.

Darby was a combative theologian eager to spread his reading. The rapture didn't take initially in Ireland and Britain, but it found limited success in the United States, especially in the 1860s as Darby began traveling overseas. He first announced his views on a pre-tribulation rapture at the 1830s Powerscourt Conference in Ireland. His acolyte James Inglis seeded Darby's eschatology through his magazine and Bible study meetings. One writer for that magazine, James H. Brookes, organized the Niagara Bible Conference from the 1870s through 1890s. This conference is widely credited with supercharging American dispensationalism just before the fundamentalist movement.

One attendee at the Niagara Conference, Cyrus I. Scofield, soon published a study Bible so widely disseminated that its influence on American Protestantism would be hard to overstate. It was the Bible my Christian grandparents and great grandparents would have read or, if not them, their ministers. The 1909 Scofield Reference Bible pairs the King James Version with footnotes explaining how a verse fits into a dispensation. Most famously, for 1 Thessalonians 4:17 ("Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."), a footnote explains: "Not church saints only, but all bodies of the saved, of whatever dispensation, are included in the first resurrection." Blink and you miss it, but the first resurrection here, where the faithful are "caught up" (Greek *harpazó*, Latin *rapturo* or *rapiemur*) is where we get the term rapture.

A dispensationalist timeline took root in American Protestantism. At Princeton's Theological Seminary, the Calvinist and Presbyterian theology of Charles Hodges and B. B. Warfield had developed the Bible's inerrancy by the 1880s. By 1924, Dallas Theological Seminary was founded to promote dispensational theology. The American fundamentalist movement—and mass-media Protestantism—found a receptive audience through cast-iron Biblical language and indestructible visions of apocalypse.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, American Protestants then tapped into zeitgeist controversies—Darwinism, the end of the Civil War, new Biblical scholarship, theological liberalism, and the social gospel—by doubling down on key beliefs and casting them as ancient and immutable. In what sense was the Bible “inerrant”? Did God’s inspiration extend to the words verbatim? Did inerrancy only apply to original documents but not copies or translations? If one Bible book described a battle with twenty-four thousand slain but another book said twenty-three, was Charles Hodge’s analogy sufficient when he said “No sane man would deny that the Parthenon was built of marble, even if here and there a speck of sandstone should be detected in its structure”?[11] Old Princeton theology doubled down on inerrancy, while ministers and professors open to novel approaches quickly learned their careers were in jeopardy. By 1908, the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA) was founded to disseminate reactionary, conservative readings of the Bible.

In 1910, the Presbyterian General Assembly adopted five fundamental doctrines: Biblical inerrancy, virgin birth, substitutionary atonement, Christ’s resurrection, and the authentic historicity of Christ’s miracles (later lists sometimes switch out miracles for the second coming).[12] These doctrines were not fundamental concerns of early church councils, but Biblical inerrancy reacts not only to Biblical criticism but also to interpretations of Charles Darwin’s theories of evolution and natural selection. These doctrines are tethered to anti-Black racism, an imaginary of a racial hierarchy—descended from the dispersal of Noah’s sons after the Flood. Noah’s son Ham, who Noah cursed, went south to become the father of the Canaanites or, in later interpretations, Africans. Substitutionary atonement—Christ’s sacrificial death bearing the punishment deserved by sinners—fixed a simple mechanism for salvation. Nineteenth-century evangelist D. L. Moody expressed the simplicity of salvation as such: “I look upon this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a lifeboat and said to me, ‘Moody, save all you can.’” Resurrection, virgin conception, and miracles reacted against theological liberalism’s suspicion of miraculous tales. Far from a pejorative, fundamentalists took the moniker for themselves as a declaration of fidelity to so-called fundamental truths, publishing twelve volumes of *The Fundamentals* between 1910 and 1915. Oil money subsidized their distribution.

Union Oil and BIOLA cofounder Lyman Stewart, along with

his brother and fellow businessman Milton, anonymously funded the distribution of *The Fundamentals*. This period saw the birth of Pentecostalism at the Azusa Street Revival of 1906 as well as early megachurches. In one grand example, Aimee Semple McPherson pioneered theatrical performances including motorcycles and planes as sermon props at Angelus Temple in Echo Park, which opened in 1923. These theological innovations spread like wildfire throughout the world on the wings of missionary activity from the United States. The rise of a Hollywood Christianity at Angelus Temple, or the novel radio preacher, show an innovatively entertainment-focused Protestantism. Radio evangelist Charles Fuller founded Fuller Theological Seminary in 1947. In the same decade, his colleague Billy Graham began crusading for converts and, by the 1960s, was packing stadiums in Anaheim, Los Angeles—and across the world. By this period, a dispensational fundamentalist Christianity stitched together anti-Black, anti-sexual liberation, anti-union, and anticommunist agendas. Southern evangelicals today decry Hollywood decadence, but oddly their faith was reborn in Los Angeles.

Historian Ernest Sandeen has said: “Ever since its rise to notoriety in the 1920s, scholars have predicted the imminent demise of the movement. The Fundamentalists, to return the favor, have predicted the speedy end of the world. Neither prophecy has so far been fulfilled.”[13] Oil money proliferated a reactionary theology, which today converts into a limitless, apocalyptically infused support for oil extraction at the precise moment when we so badly need to abandon fossil fuel reserves worth \$259 trillion.[14] Behind the theological debates, of course, was the end of chattel slavery and the rise of Jim Crow. It is more than a coincidence that the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial, which helped consolidate creationism, took place in the same decade as the height of lynching. This was the same window of time when the South commissioned so many statues of Confederate generals. At the Scopes trial, prosecutor William Jennings Bryan couldn’t stand the idea that children should be taught they descended

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from apes while barely concealing racist overtones: “Not even from American monkeys, but from old world monkeys.” It was in this context, the early decades of the twentieth century, that dispensational Zionism was literally written into Bible footnotes.



By the beginning of the Cold War, conservatives mixed racist and anticommunist agendas, but another ingredient was tested. The 1947 UN partition plan spiraled into the Nakba in 1948, the ethnic cleansing that killed fifteen thousand, destroyed over five hundred villages, and displaced seven hundred and fifty thousand. Many Palestinians from this time are still alive, and since Israel even then did not hew closely to the UN partition, Israel set a precedent for taking homes that continues today. After the British Mandate for Palestine concluded, the state of Israel was formally declared on May 14, 1948 by Zionist leader David Ben-Gurion. He believed anti-Semitism was a, more or less, permanent condition in the West. The Holocaust confirmed this to many of his contemporaries. Thus, the only solution was a Jewish state.

In the United States, a fundamentalism armed with radio preachers and oil money now faced a postwar, demobilized society increasingly crawling toward multiracial democracy. In 1954 *Brown v. Board* began school integration, and in the next decade the Civil Rights Acts gave white Christians enough fright to develop a parallel system of private schools. These were “charitable” organizations until the Supreme Court ruled against them in *Green v. Connally* (1971), revoking tax deductibility of tuition. *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 barely registered as a top concern to white evangelical leaders until 1979, when the nascent Religious Right leadership, under guidance of Heritage Foundation cofounder Paul Weyrich, pivoted from school segregation to opposing reproductive choice.

One of those leaders, Jerry Falwell of the Moral Majority, had long been concerned about the white child in the school but was now fretting over the fetus in the womb. Falwell is a typical figure of the Religious Right, a friend of Israel who nevertheless feels unconverted Jews are damned. In fact, in 2006 there was a brief moment of confusion after *The Jerusalem Post* suggested Falwell and John Hagee believed in a “dual covenant” where God saved Christians and Jews, and the latter needn’t convert; Falwell and Hagee quickly reassured followers they believed no such thing. Falwell’s influence was

an asset to Israel in the seventies and eighties. In one wild case, when Israel bombed an Iraqi nuclear reactor, Israeli Prime Minister Begin telephoned Falwell for support. The whiplash of anti-Semitic theology and *faux* philo-Semitic foreign policy never resolves. In 1999, believing the End Times could happen within a decade, Falwell said the antichrist was surely already alive and would be a Jew.

The period leading up to the Religious Right organizing to elect Reagan was also a turning point in U.S. funding for Israel. By the mid-sixties, oil overtook coal as the primary source of worldwide energy. Then in the seventies, energy shocks threw oil supply into question. The first shock was because of OAPEC's embargo on oil exports after the U.S. ramped up funding for Israel in the 1973 Yom Kippur War. The second shock in 1979 came from disruption to exports during the Iranian Revolution. Adjusted for inflation, U.S. funding for Israel in these two years soared to numbers unseen until the aftermath of October 7, 2023.[15] Energy crises and related stagflation in the seventies steered a collapsing U.S. postwar boom into a dawn of neoliberalism and austerity. Ever after, the only thing the U.S. had unlimited money for was weapons manufacturing and war. Almost all U.S. military aid to Israel flows right back to U.S. arms contractors, using the relentless killing of Arabs to juice the economy like a shadow stimulus package. For similar reasons of economic stimulus and regional influence, the U.S. provides military aid to many other Middle East governments. Israel will remain crucial for Western control over region until we decarbonize later this century, and any theology prioritizing Israel or the image of timeless regional conflict, no matter how improvised or paradoxical, is a useful ideological apparatus.

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The paradox is that, yes, U.S. evangelicals are Israel’s best friend in terms of military support, but the fantasy is shamelessly brutal. In 1970, Hal Lindsey published his bestseller *The Late Great Planet Earth*, a nonfiction treatment of dispensational eschatology linking current events to the

Bible. Many evangelicals believe Jews will convert in the End Times, but how many? The only precise number one finds, drawn from Revelation 7, is the count Lindsey taught: one hundred and forty-four thousand Jewish converts witnessing for Christ. If we math out the fantasy, out of over fifteen million Jews worldwide, fewer than one percent will be saved. The ninety-nine percent will suffer forever in hell. Lindsey called his prophetic hope “the mother of all holocausts.”



In Seminar XX, Jacques Lacan begins a digression with characteristic impiety: “I’m going to add a little more frosting on the Christ, because he is an important personage.”[16] Indeed, an important guy! Likewise, we turn to the figure of Donald Trump, who is a huge deal.

Today, white evangelicalism’s cavalier attitude to a livable ecosystem, not to mention occasionally handing nuclear codes to a game show host, demonstrates a deep nihilism. Though often figured as rightwing reaction of the Religious Right during the Reagan era, white evangelicalism is better theorized as a theological improvisation around whiteness and class reproduction in reaction to school integration and Civil Rights. [17] To be sure, Protestant evangelicalism stretches further, as the foregoing history demonstrates, but as a theological-political coalition you don’t get the insular cultural behemoth—Christian music, Christian bookstores, Christian coffeehouses, and Protestant schools teaching creationism—without the threat of a multiracial society.[18]

White evangelicalism will give ground on any doctrine, even Christ’s divinity or eternal hell. They will not, however, give up their “chosenness.” A double theft of its racism and supersessionism—copy-pasting Abraham’s blessing in Genesis—white evangelicals believe they are a chosen and redeemed people. They have a morality you couldn’t follow, a salvation proscribed to the unrighteous, and a Godly perception you cannot fathom. And survey data suggests evangelicals, in fact, are otherwise giving ground on any number of core convictions. Increasingly, “evangelical” simply signals support for Trump. In 2008, among white evangelicals who said they never attend church, 45 percent were Democrats and 36 percent were Republicans.[19] By 2022, 20 percent were Democrats and 60 percent were Republican. This is likely due to non-attenders

dropping evangelical as a poisoned self-descriptor, while Republicans adopt the term as an in-group signal. “Evangelical” no longer means church-going.

More astonishingly, to the question—“Would you describe yourself as a ‘born-again’ or evangelical Christian?”—Republicans are more likely to answer in the affirmative than any other religious group. This holds even if the evangelical Republican identifies as a non-Christian. Twenty percent of atheist Republicans identify as “‘born-again’ or evangelical” (compared to seven percent of Democrats and Independents), as well as thirty-three percent of agnostic Republicans and twenty-eight percent of “nothing in particular” Republicans.[20] Democrats and Independents are far less likely to identify as evangelical than Republicans, and I want to underscore *many Republicans call themselves evangelicals, but do not believe in God!* Such a landscape is unthinkable even a decade ago.

Trump is a messiah for many evangelicals, quite literally for Qanon. In 2022, PRRI found one fifth of Americans and a quarter of Republicans believe the “The government, media, and financial worlds in the U.S. are controlled by a group of Satan-worshipping pedophiles who run a global child sex-trafficking operation,” that a storm is coming to sweep away these elite pedophiles and “true American patriots may have to resort to violence in order to save our country.”[21] But even outside Qanon, the evangelical sees a faithful man in the one who packs the judiciary, or announces the American embassy will be moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The End Times are not yet upon us, but, through his wise servant Trump, God moves the chess pieces into position.

If you run a Google Ngram of “Judeo-Christian,” you see the term lifting off in the 1930s and soar in the 1980s. Evangelicals often speak of a Judeo-Christian heritage in the West, but this term emerged with broad changes in the public acceptability of anti-Semitism during and after the Shoah. Evangelicals recast themselves as caring deeply for the Zionist project, but never has this been out of concern for the Jewish people qua human beings. At least as far back as Mather, whether Jews shall be saved or damned is of minor consequence compared to the important of Israel as a stage for the End Times. Likewise, in the eyes of Americans, Palestinians are coded as Muslim, no matter their small Christian contingent, so their treatment by advanced weapons cannot hold a candle to what God will do in

the hereafter. In the evangelical imaginary, Jews and Muslims shall soon come to an end, whether by conversion or hell.

The West will arm Israel to consolidate that state. Two agendas coalesce. A cold, calculating *realpolitik* schemes to prevent a pan-Arab power over regional fossil reserves, while a Christian Zionist sees pieces in place for Armageddon. Two goals but one outcome. Violence spreads from Gaza and the West Bank to Iran or anywhere else in the war theater, as Iraqis, Afghans, Yemenis, and Syrians know well. Palestine continues to be the quilting point for the U.S. Unprecedented student encampments, brutal repression by universities and their police, and continued arms to Israel risk depressing turnout in 2024 and throwing an election. No matter.

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The House of Representatives recently passed an act which defines criticism of Israel as anti-Semitism. Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene voted against it, because it also defined as anti-Semitism her desire to say the Jews killed Jesus. Her theology underwrites her support for Israel, but when the House adopted a definition of anti-Semitism (from International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, which also labels as anti-Semitism “claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor”) that includes her theology, then our Congressional clown feels a conflict between her support for genocide and the theology justifying it. This was only one high profile case. Christian Zionism rife with anti-Semitism. So the definition of Zionism must contort within a *folie à deux*, a shared U.S.-Israel madness extending beyond evangelicals to liberals as well. Keep in mind the Gaza genocide was authorized by President Biden, not an evangelical but a self-described Zionist.

For Lacan, the quilting point stitches the signifier to the signified. Without those connections, language breaks down: psychosis. What we increasingly see is clearly not a clinical

psychosis but instead an enacted or performative psychosis. Lacan's discursive theory works like a simple algorithm such that, in the master's discourse, a master signifier gives a command (S1), a worker receives the command and puts it to work (S2), a product e.g. surplus value is created (a) and yielded back to the master, and all along the truth of the master—that he is a split-subject (\$) with no great power—is repressed. Lacan later suggested capitalism works a bit differently: instead of a clear link between a master giving a command and a worker receiving and implementing the command (S1–S2), capitalism has a falseness to it such that the boss presents himself as a regular human face (\$) giving guidance that represses or disavows the truth of his power over others as a master signifier (S1), which means the commands are filtered through repressed truth (now operating deceptively like a lie) before being absorbed and implemented by workers (\$–S1–S2).[22] For example, we are asked to see our boss not as a master demanding we meet metrics or else we are fired; instead the boss's demand is filtered through an image of him as a paternal figurehead of a big family. Our landlord is not mining us for surplus value; he's just a regular guy that must pay bills too! If the traditional master-servant relationship was one of overt threats and violence, capitalism found ways to mollify proletarian discontent by filtering commands through inverted truths.

Shifting to Zionism, U.S. policymakers cannot simply acknowledge unlimited military support for a client state for energy control, just as evangelicals must not speak loudly of how they expect nearly all Jews to suffer in hell. Those expectations are repressed truths, but as signifiers they filter what citizens and churchgoers hear. Thus, genuine criticism of Israel's genocide is reinterpreted as anti-Semitism. This also allows actual instances of anti-Semitism, of which there are many, to proliferate. The right-winger need not believe the dogma they repeat about campus protesters being anti-Semites; what matters is that they get to believe America's militarism is good and their faith is righteous.

When I say anti-Semitism accusations are often performative when used against anti-genocide protestors, I indicate two aspects: the accuser is likely aware they are lying, if only faintly, but the lie is constitutive for their sense of righteousness and integrity. Additionally, Freud said delusions are compensatory, even we suffer them. What does the U.S. evangelical get from all these delusions compounding

prophesies, foreign policy, and anti-Semitism? Aside from militarism creating a strong dollar and cheap commodities, which is no small benefit of empire, what does the evangelical get from cheering for genocide and gladly paying taxes toward it? There is no singular answer, of course, but I let the reader understand a part of the answer for which there is no doubt: if you are asking conservative evangelicals to criticize Israel's genocide, you are, more or less, asking them to abandon the faith that makes their lives bearable.

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Taking Malm's article “The Destruction of Palestine Is the Destruction of the Earth,” I wonder if the salvation of Palestine is the salvation of the Earth.[23] I don't mean to be cute. This is deadly serious. Given that Israel trains U.S. police and border patrols, sentry drones that police borders might be

loaded with “less lethal” rubber bullets and tear gas for protests near you. Quilting points are fraying into accusations untethered to reality—the reality where people are dying, murdered—such that a student encampment demanding a ceasefire is translated in bad faith as anti-Semitism or pro-terrorism. What are the limits to free speech when signifiers break down so obviously, yet media and universities repeat accusations in bad faith while the White House press secretary likens their own protesting base to Nazis?

All this racism in service to fossil fuel and weapons industries taps into a *jouissance* of the Christian apocalyptic imaginary, an excessive enjoyment so clearly attesting to a death drive with all its sadistic and masochistic components. Ben-Gurion understood binationalism to be a non-starter, and it is hard to see how binationalism is an option now with so many settlements across the West Bank. If it is to be an ethnostate, it must remain repressive until the End. This is, likewise, the political imaginary of the evangelical. They might rightly feel shame, but what they feel instead is an enthralling anxiety, probing prophecy books and sermons for clues to the question Scofield footnoted under Matthew 24: “When shall these things be?”

Gilles Deleuze suggested there is a danger in a dream. A lesson

for us all. Whether religious or secular, Jewish or Christian, the dream of Zionism is always posited as the dream of the big Other with a race hierarchy. “Dreams are a terrifying will to power” Deleuze said. “Each of us is more or less a victim of other people's dreams. . . Beware of the dreams of others, because if you are caught in their dream, you are done for.”[24] For years, a more popular, apocryphal version of this quote has circulated online: “If you’re trapped in the dream of the Other, you’re fucked.”

[1]For a discussion of archeology and the challenge of human remains, see Nir Hasson, “Israeli Archaeologists Dodge the Law to Study Human Remains,” Haaretz, September 4, 2016, sec. Israel News, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2016-09-04/ty-article/.premium/israeli-archaeologists-dodge-the-law-to-study-human-remains/0000017f-ee3a-d3be-ad7f-fe3b89690000>.

[2] See Michael Lipka, “More White Evangelicals than American Jews Say God Gave Israel to the Jewish People,” Pew Research Center (blog), October 3, 2013, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2013/10/03/more-white-evangelicals-than-american-jews-say-god-gave-israel-to-the-jewish-people/>.

[3] See “U.S. Christians’ Views on the Return of Christ,” Pew Research Center (blog), March 26, 2013, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2013/03/26/us-christians-views-on-the-return-of-christ/>, and Stacy Rosenberg, “Section 3: War, Terrorism and Global Trends,” Pew Research Center (blog), June 22, 2010, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2010/06/22/section-3-war-terrorism-and-global-trends/>.

[4]Daniel Cox, Juhem Navarro-Rivera, and Robert P. Jones, “Americans More Likely to Attribute Increasingly Severe Weather to Climate Change, Not End Times,” Public Religion Research Institute, December 13, 2012, <https://www.prri.org/research/prri-rns-december-2012-survey/>.

[5]Ibid. See also Shibley Telhami, “American Attitudes Toward the Middle East and Israel” Center for Middle East Policy at

Brookings,” accessed July 26, 2024,
<https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2015-Poll-Key-Findings-Final.pdf>.

[6] Jeff Diamant, “About Four-in-Ten U.S. Adults Believe Humanity Is ‘Living in the End Times,’” Pew Research Center (blog), December 8, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/12/08/about-four-in-ten-u-s-adults-believe-humanity-is-living-in-the-end-times/>.

[7] Increase Mather, *The Mystery of Israel’s Salvation, Explained and Applied* (London, 1669), 18.

[8] *Ibid.*, 21.

[9] *Ibid.*, 31.

[10] *Ibid.*, 35.

[11] See Ernest R. Sandeen, “The Princeton Theology: One Source of Biblical Literalism in American Protestantism,” *Church History*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (1962), 307-321.

[12] “The Doctrinal Deliverance of 1910,” PCA Historical Center, 2018,
<https://www.pcahistory.org/documents/deliverance.html>.

[13] Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800–1930* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970), ix.

[14] For valuation of reserves and carbon sequestration, see especially chapter six of Tad DeLay, *Future of Denial: The Ideologies of Climate Change* (London: Verso, 2024).

[15] Jonathan Masters and Will Merrow, “U.S. Aid to Israel in Four Charts,” Council on Foreign Relations, May 31, 2024,
<https://www.cfr.org/article/us-aid-israel-four-charts>.

[16] Jacques Lacan and Bruce Fink, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, book 20 (New York (N. Y.): W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 113.

[17] For a history of evangelical reactions to school integration, the rise of private schools as an alternative, and evangelical leaders organizing against reproductive choice once segregation fell out of favor as a rallying cause, see especially chapter two

in Tad DeLay, *Against: What Does the White Evangelical Want?* (Eugene: Cascade, 2019).

[18] Jonathan Masters and Will Merrow, “U.S. Aid to Israel in Four Charts,” Council on Foreign Relations, May 31, 2024, <https://www.cfr.org/article/us-aid-israel-four-charts>.

[19] Ryan Burge, Twitter, January 16, 2024, <https://x.com/ryanburge/status/1747301102616215915>.

[20] Ryan Burge, Twitter, May 5, 2024, <https://x.com/ryanburge/status/1787217874286792771>.

[21] “The Persistence of QAnon in the Post-Trump Era: An Analysis of Who Believes the Conspiracies,” PRRI (blog), February 24, 2022, <https://www.prri.org/research/the-persistence-of-qanon-in-the-post-trump-era-an-analysis-of-who-believes-the-conspiracies/>.

[22] For an excellent exploration of the capitalist discourse as a false discourse, see Samo Tomšic, *The Capitalist Unconscious: Marx and Lacan* (London: Verso, 2015).

[23] Malm, “The Destruction of Palestine Is the Destruction of the Earth,” Verso, April 8, 2024, <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/news/the-destruction-of-palestine-is-the-destruction-of-the-earth>.

[24] Gilles Deleuze, “What Is the Creative Act?”