## Apocalyptic Expectations and Conspiracy Theories

Surrealist anti-communist conspiracy theories were spread on numerous radio stations in the United States and jumped to television, as the McCarthy hearings demonstrated. The Billy Graham crusades were carried on radio and television and shepherded a flock of Christian Right programming, much of it spreading conspiracy theories of subversion through treason and immorality secretly controlled by a subterranean web of communists undermining the nation.

Apocalyptic millenarianism, admittedly a mouthful, is embraced in the United States today by far more people than identify themselves as born-again Christian evangelicals. It is derived from a secular version that is represented by books such as “Moby Dick”, the movies “High Noon” and “Apocalypse Now,” television series such as “Buffy the Vampire Slayer” and many more.

Matt Rothschild of the *Progressive* magazine looked at how President George W. Bush mixed religious and secular apocalyptic and millennial themes, and pronounced them a form of “messianic militarism:

===Bush, a Methodist, but also a born-again evangelical, probably does not believe in the Rapture or the idea that the End Times are close at hand, but he and his handlers know how to speak to that audience (2003)

So do Trump’s handlers. They rely on language that is familiar to the religious and secular alike. In this American version of the apocalypse, as the “End Times” wrap up, there appear “the four horsemen of the apocalypse,” and some people “behold a pale horse” representing death. God punishes the sinful and unbelievers with his “terrible swift sword,” while some 144,000 Jews convert to Christianity at the last minute. The rest of the Jews (and everyone else who are not “real” Christians) have their bodies crushed as in “stamping out a vintage” like the “grapes of wrath” with their blood flowing as a river down past Mount Megiddo in Israel (aka Armageddon). Then their souls are cast into the sulphurous fires of Hell while the righteous “inherit the Earth” as the wind blows over the bones of the dead. You do not need to be an English scholar to know which way this wind blows.

Many Christians do not buy into this precise scenario—but millions—perhaps tens of millions—take seriously the possibility that the End Times are near, and that the battles that rage in the Middle East might be part of the war between good and evil prophesied in the book of Revelation.

Here is another eschatological stumbling block. Many of the Muslims involved in struggles for control over the Middle East read an End Times script represented by a disputed prophecy about the “Black Flags of Khorason” which are carried by the fighters in ISIS.

Meanwhile some apocalyptic Jews have plans to seize the Temple Mount in Jerusalem (*Haram al Sharif* to the Muslims who currently occupy the land) This is because the apocalyptic Jews feel mandated to fulfill the call for their Messiah to return to Earth, which requires rebuilding the Temple of Solomon. In the United States Christians in Texas are breeding a “blemish-free” Red Heifer to be used as a sacrifice prior to the building third Temple of Solomon. This, incidentally, requires the millennialist Jews to raze the many Muslim holy shrines currently on the what Jews call the Temple Mount. That’s assuming the entire Middle East has not been blown into radioactive waste by the ensuing battles.

### Fascism as an Apocalyptic Script

What does Trump’s announcement that the United States is moving its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem have to do with the apocalyptic prophesies in the Bible’s Old and New Testaments? See it as a payback to the approximately 80% of White Christian Evangelicals who voted for Trump in the election (Lovett 2016). This courtship started with the selection of Mike Pence as Trump’s Vice President running mate.

Pause here and consider that many Christians are our allies in the struggle against neofascism in the United States (Isaiah 10:1-2, Matthew 5:9). As Civil Rights Movement legend and human rights activists Ruby Sales explains, there is a struggle within Christianity between those of us who pursue Liberation and those that want to build Empires (2004).

Dualistic apocalyptic narratives long ago slipped away from Christian religious theology and began to influence secular belief systems and ideologies in Europe and the United States. It is the drive to bring heaven to Earth that sparks the activist form of apocalypticism and spawns a wide variety of utopian religious, political, and social movements (Landes 2011; Scafi 2006). Vogelin, studied the rise of utopian totalitarianism in Hitler’s Germany and Stalin’s Russia in the 1930s. Vogelin warned there was much danger in the apocalyptic idea that there was an end time for the current historic epoch at which point the forces of evil would be vanquished and the forces for good rewarded (Vogelin 1952, 120, 162-166). This idea of and End Times battle known as the impulse to “hasten the eschaton” (Baumgarten, 230-233; Frankel 1991, 210-211; Henze 2011, 161; Sarris 2011, 260). In Greek eschaton means “last”; and it refers here to the study of what people think of as the “end times.”

Fascism, which is built around populist scapegoating and aggression, is a millenarian apocalyptic belief system, especially in its form as Nazism (Voegelin 1952, pp. 120, 162-166, Rhodes 1980, Redles 2005) And thus Alt-Right and the Trump regime are based on apocalyptic belief systems that see political struggles as a battle between good and evil.