

Biblical Patriotism: An Evangelical Alternative to Nationalism

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AN IMPRINT OF THE
GLOBAL CENTER FOR RELIGIOUS RESEARCH
1312 17TH STREET • SUITE 549
DENVER, COLORADO 80202

INFO@GCRR.ORG • GCRR.ORG

GCR Press
An imprint of the Global Center for Religious Research
1312 17th Street Suite 549
Denver, CO 80202
www.gcr.org

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DOI: 10.33929/GCRPress.2021.03

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Typesetting/Proofreading: Kimberly Dell
Cover Design: Abdullah Al Mahmud
fiverr.com/mahmuddidar

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Biblical patriotism: an evangelical alternative to nationalism / Adam Wyatt
p. cm.

Includes bibliographic references (p.)

ISBN (Print): 978-1-7378469-0-1

ISBN (eBook): 978-0-578-80731-7

1. Bible—Hermeneutics—Criticism, interpretation, etc. 2.
Hermeneutics—Religious aspects—Christianity. 3. Christianity and
politics. 4. Patriotism. 5. Nationalism. 5. Church and state. 6.
Evangelicalism. I. Title.

BV629-631 .W938 2021



Mom and Dad, thanks for giving me a love for Jesus and His church.
Laurie, thanks for loving me like Jesus and for serving His church with me.
Abby, Lily, and Sophie, may you fiercely love Jesus and His church in the
coming years.

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Preface

I'm a military kid. My dad served faithfully in the Air Force, which led me to live in various parts of the world. I was living in West Germany as a child when the Berlin Wall came down, and I used to have pieces of it but, being a child, I did not truly understand the cultural and historical significance of a few pieces of concrete, so they are now lost. I still remember as a child going on to the military base to watch a movie. Instead of the normal movie trailers that many of us love to see, we stood for the national anthem that was played. Moments like these helped shape my understanding of patriotism.

My dad was also a pastor, so standing for the anthem before movies was a big deal, but, more so, was the picture of the local church that I saw. Although the church was made up of mostly military families, it was truly diverse. Our congregation had people from all over the United States and there were so many ethnicities that gathered to worship together. Seeing a diverse church made up of mostly military families also helped shape my understanding of patriotism.

When I started my Ph.D. in 2015, I had no idea what I wanted my dissertation to focus on, but I knew that I wanted something *current* to help keep me motivated. Enter July 16, 2015: the day Donald Trump entered the race for president of the United States. I did not know it then, but this was the beginning of my study on patriotism. To be honest, Trump came out of nowhere. But, slowly and methodically, his vision to "Make America Great Again" gathered much support, especially among evangelicals. He argued that America was not what it once was but it could be again. He made the case that America needed to be better. This resonated with many. It resonated with me. I have always wanted the best for my country and my people and this has always influenced my thoughts

on politics. So, I understood the draw of someone like Trump. However, I also saw something else, something that I couldn't quite put my finger on.

Making America great again was a wonderful ideal but what would that entail? That was the question. As it became more obvious that Trump was going to secure the Republican nomination, patriotic sentiment rose to the forefront of the American consciousness. This patriotic sentiment filtered into the local church and, for the first time in my ministry, politics became something that I had to consistently address in conversations. I finally had a *current topic* for my dissertation; I finally had a topic to research.

When I first started researching, I had no idea just how much the cultural, political, and theological landscape would change in regards to patriotism. I knew that it was a valid and worthy topic to study, but I was not fully prepared for the topic to dominate so much of my personal and spiritual world. Patriotism, something that I always felt was a virtue, slowly became something altogether unrecognizable to me or, at the very least, something that was distorted. When you added the firebrand, Donald Trump, to the mix, you had a blurring of nationalism with patriotism, which many could not differentiate. However, I thought that it was increasingly important to be able to distinguish nationalism from its healthier counterpart, patriotism. This book attempts to bring to the forefront some of the questions that I started to prayerfully work through at the local church level, but it is also just a small drop in the bucket of the valuable theological study that needs to be done in the area.

During the last year of writing, it became even more apparent that patriotism within the church was going to be a topic that needed more clarification. George Floyd's death, BLM and a new civil rights movement, professional athletes kneeling during the national anthems, COVID-19, and the subsequent church closings and mask mandates made it clear that people have a broad way of viewing their place in the political landscape. So, this topic continued to remain *current*. People's thoughts on marches, riots, kneelings, church closings, and masks were influenced by their flavor of patriotism. This made my project challenging.

My hope is, quite simply, that we will be willing to engage with the concepts in a way that both challenges our modern

conceptions of patriotism and what a patriotic Christian should be while also embracing the good that patriotism can offer. After all, America is a great country. She is marred by her past, but she also has a noble history. Though the landscape will change, I truly believe that the Bible offers the best way to embrace the good of our own country while also offering us a proper critique of it. Hopefully, this book will stir you to a proper affection for the United States, but, more importantly, I hope that it stirs you to a deeper affection for the God of the Bible who makes us all citizens of Heaven. May Jesus' name be the one we shout for in the coming days.

The Context and the Problem

What is patriotism? A simple definition of “patriotism” is having a love of one’s own country.¹ While simple, the term “patriotism,” at least for many Americans, is one that is difficult to fully understand due to its connection with nationalism; and for many, patriotism cannot be divorced from nationalism, which leads to a negative view of patriotism.² Many claim patriotism as a virtue because it leads a person to seek out the good for one’s country.³ However, is loving one’s country all that is needed for someone to be patriotic? Further, what does it take for someone to truly love his country? For some, patriotism implies the love for one’s country, but for countless others, it implies something much more significant. For others, nationalism is often connected in terms of racism, ethnocentrism, and bigotry and, as a result, is not virtuous.⁴ What is needed is an understanding of what patriotism is

¹ Mitja Sarđoć, “The Anatomy of Patriotism,” *Anthropological Notebooks* 23 (2017): 44; Margaret Gilbert, “*Pro Patria*: An Essay on Patriotism,” *Journal of Ethics* 13 (2009): 322; Ryan LaMothe, “The Problem of Patriotism: A Psychoanalytic and Theological Analysis,” *Pastoral Psychology* 58 (2009): 152.

² Peter Alter argues that nationalism is “one of the most ambiguous concepts of the present-day vocabulary of political and analytical thought.” Peter Alter, *Nationalism* (London: Arnold, 1985), 1. This ambiguous nature of terminology of both “nationalism” and “patriotism” gives rise to a misunderstanding of what it means to be patriotic.

³ See Alasdair MacIntyre, “Is Patriotism a Virtue?” in *Patriotism*, ed. Igor Primoratz (New York: Humanity, 2002), 43–58.

⁴ While patriotism *is* closely associated with nationalism, it will be argued that it is something altogether different. Qiong Li and Marilynn Brewer argue that there is a clear differentiation between the two terms. See Qiong Li and Marilynn Brewer, “What Does It Mean to Be an American? Patriotism, Nationalism, and American Identity after 9/11,” *Political Psychology* 25 (2004): 727–739. See also, David Crittendon, “Differentiating Patriotism and Nationalism: Influence of Valence of Primes,” *The New School Psychology*

and what it entails to see if it has any connotations with biblical virtue.

Much overlap exists between the concept of country and nation within the concepts of patriotism and nationalism, but the interest in patriotism and nationalism is a relatively modern phenomenon.⁵ A resurgence of nationalist “movements” in the global world has combined with challenges of modernization, migration, and the resulting multiculturalism to provide for an increased interest in a philosophical understanding of both patriotism and nationalism.⁶ Both terms involve the love and identification of a nation or entity along with a concern for it. In patriotism, the object of love and identification is one’s country, or *patria*, but for nationalism, the object of love is one’s nation, or *natio*. Igor Primoratz argues that both terms are connected and understood as being the same set of beliefs and feelings but with a different object.⁷

Since people are born in a specific country, they tend to have a natural affinity toward their country.⁸ However, this does not answer the question of whether patriotism is a virtue or something a

Bulletin 15 (2018): 1–10. The varying definitions, understandings, and misunderstandings of the two terms show the need for further study on the topic. Amélie Mummendey, et al. argue, “In a nutshell, nationalism is seen as inherently related to out-group derogation, whereas patriotism is expected to reveal a positive relation to own group *independent of* out-group derogation.” Amélie Mummendey, et al., “Nationalism and Patriotism: National Identification and Out-Group Rejection,” *British Journal of Social Psychology* 40 (2001): 160. On how nationalism can hide ethnonationalism, see Farida Fozdar and Mitchell Low, “‘They Have to Abide by Our Laws . . . and Stuff’: Ethnonationalism Masquerading as Civic Nationalism,” *Nations and Nationalism* 21 (2015), 524–543.

⁵ Steven Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality: Ancient and Modern* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 13.

⁶ Andrew Tan, *U.S. Strategy against Global Terrorism: How It Evolved, Why It Failed, and Where It Is Headed* (New York: Palgrave, 2009), 85.

⁷ Igor Primoratz, “Patriotism and Morality: Mapping the Terrain,” *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 5 (2008): 205–206.

⁸ Anthony Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism* (Routledge: London, 2009), 26–27. Anthony Smith argues that ethnic ties create associations of people that grow into self-defined ethnic communities. These self-defined communities allow a people to share a common ancestry, memories, and other elements of a common culture.

person should, at the very least, possess if he is to be a good citizen. These are questions that sociologists, philosophers, and historians have researched and argued for years. However, a further question exists: is patriotism something that a “Christian” should possess, and if so, to what end? For many, being a faithful Christian is associated with being patriotic.⁹

For a long time, patriotism was a neglected topic in the academy and major philosophic writings.¹⁰ As already stated, there is a connection of patriotism to nationalism, which is a significant reason for the academy’s lack of interest or desire in looking at nationalism.¹¹ Despite patriotism’s significance to the pantheon of political philosophy, it remains a broadly challenged concept due to the misunderstanding of its connection to nationalism. This misunderstanding stems from a highly generalized understanding of nationalism with its connection to national pride.¹²

American patriotism seems a simple matter; however, as Wilfred McClay posits, “[I]t is simple only until one actually starts to think about it, inquire about its sources, and investigate its manifestations.”¹³ Patriotism, in its contemporary scope, along with its connection to nationalism, is a political philosophy that makes

⁹ For example, Robert Jeffress, pastor of the historic First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, has church services throughout the year celebrating freedom in Christ *and* freedom as Americans. Michael Lienesch shows that American Christian leaders throughout history have connected civil religion to patriotism; and as a result, neither is going away. Michael Lienesch, “Contesting Civil Religion: Religious Responses to American Patriotic Nationalism, 1919–1929,” *Religion and American Culture* 28 (2018). Alexis de Tocqueville noticed the connection of Christianity and patriotism in America, “In the United States religion is therefore commingled with all habits of the nation and all the feelings of patriotism; whence it derives a peculiar force.” Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve, vol. 2 (New York: Colonial, 1900), 6.

¹⁰ Igor Primoratz, ed., *Patriotism* (Amherst: Humanity, 2002), 9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹² Rui de Figueiredo Jr. and Zachary Elkins, “Are Patriots Bigots? An Inquiry into the Vices of In-Group Pride,” *American Journal of Political Science* 47 (2003): 172; Sardoč, “The Anatomy of Patriotism,” 43.

¹³ Wilfred McClay, “America—Idea or Nation?” *The Public Interest* (2001): 44.

many people uncomfortable.¹⁴ Regardless of the seemingly implied connections to nationalism, patriotism is a worthy topic of academic study. Further, the misunderstanding of the topic is not a reason to be reluctant in pursuing academic knowledge in this field. Instead, this misunderstanding of the topic makes it clear that there is a need in research. To that end, Daniel Holst argues the academy has “scholarly hostility” toward the topic of patriotism because of the academy has an “incomplete analysis” of what patriotism truly is.¹⁵ This modern, incomplete analysis is a result of several contemporary issues.

Historical Underpinnings of American Patriotism

Puritanism

The issue of patriotism in America is much more complicated than the issue of patriotism in general.¹⁶ The early settlers of America had a distinct understanding that God had ordained the colonization of the New World as an extension of His sovereign will in all of the world. In 1630, John Winthrop, one of the leading founders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and eventual governor of the state, preached “A Modell of Christian Charity” showing how they fully believed that the hand of God was upon their journey to the New

¹⁴ Stephen Nathanson, “In Defense of ‘Moderate Patriotism,’” in *Patriotism*, ed. Igor Primoratz (Amherst: Humanity, 2002), 87. Harry Brighthouse notes that some have fears that national loyalties eventually lead to disregard for universal obligations that are owed to all people; additionally, he sees that some see these patriotic loyalties having a “disruptive effect” in how nations exist in the world. Harry Brighthouse, “Justifying Patriotism,” *Social Theory and Practice* 32 (2006): 553. Jennifer Wolak and Ryan Dawkins posit that Americans show so much patriotism in surveys that the question can be raised whether this patriotism is simply blind allegiance or an genuinely held belief. Jennifer Wolak and Ryan Dawkins, “The Roots of Patriotism across Political Contexts,” *Political Psychology* 38 (2017): 391.

¹⁵ Daniel Holst, “From Patriotism’s Christian Narrative to Ironic War Poetry” (master’s thesis, Western Illinois University, 2018), 5.

¹⁶ Mark Noll, *One Nation under God? Christian Faith and Political Action in America* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 7.

World. “We shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us; so that if we shall deal falsely with our god in this work we have undertaken and so cause him to withdraw his present help from us.”¹⁷ This concept of America being a “city on a hill” has been used for generations to imply that God is specifically behind the inner workings of America, but more than that, has been used to imply that America is to exist as a nation that all the world can imitate.¹⁸

Puritans left England to settle the New World partly because of their desire to worship freely but partly because of their Calvinist theology. While not the only religion in the colonies, Calvinism was the dominant influence in the early period of American history known as the Puritan period.¹⁹ The Calvinist understanding of God’s sovereignty meant that for the Puritans, God had given the early Americans a national mission and became a central tenet to the American sense of religion and helped form the foundation of its sense of patriotism and public life.²⁰ Since God had given the Americans a clear mission, any attempt at halting that mission was a direct attack on God’s plans. Thus, the Puritans identified themselves with the cause of Christ, and as a result, the kingdom of

¹⁷ John Winthrop, “A Modell of Christian Charity,” in *Political Thought in America: An Anthology*, ed. Michael Levy (Prospect Heights: Waveland, 1992), 12. All citations from this sermon have been Anglicized from the original while maintaining original capitalization and punctuation.

¹⁸ George Marsden, *Religion and the American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, 1990), 22. Marlana Portolano states, “America rhetoric from Winthrop’s ‘City on a Hill’ to Reagan’s ‘shining city’ to Barack Obama’s rhetoric of hope relies on underlying utopian metaphors” that are distinctly Christian and, at the same time, “American.” Marlana Portolano, “The Rhetorical Function of Utopia: An Exploration of the Concept of Utopia in Rhetorical Theory,” *Utopian Studies* 23 (2012): 120.

¹⁹ Noll, *One Nation under God?* 23. Mark Noll states, “Puritanism is the only colonial religious system that modern historians take seriously as a major religious influence on the Revolution.” Mark Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford, 2002), 32.

²⁰ Anatol Lieven, *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 30. Puritanism “was not merely a religious creed and a theology, it was also a program for society.” Perry Miller, *Errand in the Wilderness* (New York: Harper, 1954), 191.

God and the nation became synonymous.²¹ Further, the American republic was seen as the primary agent of redemptive history; the Puritans saw themselves, and the nation by extension, chosen by God to fulfill a special mission in the world.²² Puritans saw themselves fulfilling this mission most clearly by seeking to influence the culture around it; and one way they attempted this was through political endeavors. Christian political involvement, primarily influenced by this Puritan theology, was “direct, forceful, and unqualified” and “played a very important part in securing independence from Great Britain.”²³

George McKenna understands that to the Puritans, God had ordained everything in early American life, and this had a broad impact on its politics. This Puritan “narrative” was the underlying “scaffolding” of an American culture that was a heroic story of a people attempting to exist and thrive as God’s country.²⁴ This Puritan narrative had at least four characteristics that helped to steer the historical framework of America. First, Puritans saw America as paralleling ancient Israel. In this way, Americans were God’s chosen people who had been sent into the wilderness to carry out His mission and to set an example before the watching world.²⁵ Second, the Puritans believed that their faith should be more than contemplative but activist. By carrying out God’s mission in the world, they were giving evidence of God’s grace upon them. Third,

²¹ Noll, *One Nation under God?* 49; Nathan Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 143.

²² Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty*, 155. Seventeenth century Puritan understanding of “chosenness” was a factor that “contributed largely to America’s view of themselves as a people set apart by God.” John Wilsey, *One Nation under God? An Evangelical Critique of Christian America* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2011), 98. The rhetoric of early New England Puritanism was two-sided: On the one hand, they clearly saw the colonization of the New World as an example of their “chosenness,” but on the other hand, they had an extreme fear that God might judge them in its colonization if they were not faithful. McKenna, *Puritan Origins of Patriotism*, 41.

²³ Noll, *One Nation under God?* 35.

²⁴ McKenna, *The Puritan Origins of Patriotism*, 48–51.

²⁵ Puritans compared themselves to Israel also because they saw themselves as seeking to leave England, whom they saw as a tyrannical empire, to settle in a promised land. Wilsey, *One Nation under God?* 80.

the Puritans believed in covenant theology that stressed that the country would prosper if they continued to hold to that mission but would be punished if they were unfaithful.²⁶ Fourth, the Puritans understood that America was at war with England; this was a war with the Antichrist, so the American Revolution was, in essence, a holy war.

The American Revolution was seen as a religious experience to much of early American culture, and it provided the fundamental basis for much of historical and modern American civil religion as Puritan theology shifted.²⁷ First, Americans stopped seeing themselves as people who were fleeing persecution but as people who were meant to evangelize the world. Second, many turned into people who were committed to defending their God-given freedoms from the British. As America won their independence from the British, they saw themselves as having won their freedom from an evil empire and having God-ordained legitimacy given to them as a result. Third, the early Puritan fathers became concerned with keeping watch over the new nation in an attempt to see it committed to practicing habits of lawfulness and hard work. As these shifts happened, the foundations for patriotism were laid.²⁸

Civil Religion

Civil religion in America further allowed patriotism to be a staple in American culture.²⁹ “Civil religion” is the “religious way of thinking about politics and a country or nation due to broadly held

²⁶ John Carlson and Jonathan Ebel stress that the biblical covenant helped shape the American identity from colonial times. John Carlson and Jonathan Ebel, *From Jeremiad to Jihad: Religion, Violence, and America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 64.

²⁷ Catherine Albanese, *Sons of the Fathers: The Civil Religion of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976), 6.

²⁸ McKenna, *The Puritan Origins of Patriotism*, 42, 76.

²⁹ Robert Bellah’s excellent article on the issue makes the case that American civil religion is a well-institutionalized religious system in America that should be looked at in much the same way as all other forms of religion in America. Bellah went on to stress that American civil religion is clearly “differentiated” from the religion found in its churches. Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus* 96 (1967): 1–21.

beliefs about its history and destiny.” Civil religion provides a culture with a sense of meaning, which, in turn, allows people to look at their political community in a distinctive sense. This distinctive way of looking at a country helps to bring about a sense of collective purpose, which helps it to bring about social assimilation. In short, civil religion is the “social glue” that connects a given society.³⁰ Civil religion in America built upon the Puritan narrative that held a belief in a personal God who gave America a special mission intervened in its history and was using it as a way to redeem the world.³¹

Civil religion was introduced by philosophers such as Machiavelli and Hobbes and was further defined by Rousseau. However, it found its contemporary definition, at least in its American context, in Robert Bellah’s landmark essay, “Civil Religion in America.”³² While not explicitly defining “civil religion,” Bellah described it as something that is revealed through the way American people experience the world around them. Specifically, his understanding of civil religion saw God as the central symbol in America; and as such, God had a specific national mission for America and her citizens. This mission was most clearly seen in specific periods of American trials or difficulties.³³

³⁰ *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, s.v. “civil religion”; John Coleman, “Civil Religion,” *Sociological Analysis* 31 (1970): 67, 70.

³¹ McKenna, *The Puritan Origins*, 369.

³² Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” 1–21. Bellah’s importance to the topic cannot be understated. Lienesch notes that the essay has been cited in no less than two thousand five hundred academic and scholarly writings. Lienesch, “Contesting Civil Religion,” 92.

³³ Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” 15. Bellah fleshes his understanding of these periods of “trials” in Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in the Time of Trial* (Chicago: Chicago University, 1970), 176–180. Here, he lists three periods of American trials that have helped shape civil religion. First, the trial of the American Revolution brought about the writing of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. In this period, America was seen as a nation created by God with the divine mission. The second period of trial was the time of the Civil War. This period was defined by concepts such as sacrifice and death, most notably shown by Abraham Lincoln and his Gettysburg Address. The third period of trial was during the civil rights movement and the Vietnam era. Martin Luther King was the “champion” of this era with his rhetoric that spoke to civil and religious themes that chastised the nation for not

Civil religion finds meaning and expression in meaningful cultural symbols, and this is especially true in America.³⁴ There are national saints like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King; sacred spaces like Arlington National Cemetery, Gettysburg, and the sites of the 9/11 attacks. There even exists in the context of civil religion in America the sense of sacred time like July 4 and Memorial Day.³⁵ The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution both, according to the concepts of American civil religion, have secured a sense of sacredness; the Declaration of Independence symbolizing the sacred act of revolution and the Constitution symbolizing the sacred institution of the government following the victory of the holy war against Britain that God had ordained.³⁶

The belief that God played a “constitutive” role in the founding fathers and helped to set the tone of civil religion as it is in America today cannot be understated. Archetypes like America as a “chosen people” and a “promised land” and a “new Israel” began in the Puritan period but continue to play a prominent role in American culture today. God has been a central symbol in American civil religion and continues to be.³⁷

Early American Puritanism played a distinctive role in the founding of America, but when coupled with American civil religion, the groundwork was made for a distinctly patriotic nation. How could Americans not be patriotic when its citizens saw God’s

being true to its divine mission. Jermaine McDonald argues that America is deep within a fourth trial that has arisen due to the perceived threat of Islamic terrorism. Jermaine McDonald, “A Fourth Time of Trial: Towards an Implicit and Inclusive American Civil Religion,” *Implicit Religion* 16 (2013): 50.

³⁴ John Wilsey, *American Exceptionalism and Civil Religion: Reassessing the History of an Idea* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2015), 23. The American flag may be the most prominent symbol in all of American civil religion, and this topic will be addressed later in this project.

³⁵ Catherine Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1981), 296–297; Conrad Cherry, “Nation, Church, and Private Religion: The Emergence of an American Pattern,” *Journal of Church and State* 14 (1972): 232; Clifton Black, “American Scriptures,” *Theology Today* 67 (2010): 127–168.

³⁶ Albanese, *Sons of the Father*, 184, 216.

³⁷ Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” 6–7, 17–18.

hand in its settling, founding, and revolution from its enemies? Civil religion in America has thrived because of religious freedom and the disestablishment of a state-sponsored church; this has meant that no specific religious sect can define America's religious identity.³⁸ The notion of civil religion in America is an essential backdrop for the discussion on patriotism because it sees America as something more than a nation; it posits that America is a nation that loyalty is owed to due to its unique relationship with God. As such, to not be patriotic can be seen almost as sin.

Civil religion is a "strange beast" in that it can appear to mean almost anything to anyone at almost any time.³⁹ Regardless, civil religion promises to persist and is perhaps the best starting point for considering the future of American patriotism.⁴⁰

Contemporary Issues Regarding the Need for a Proper Understanding of Patriotism

While American patriotism is not a new development, four contemporary events show the need for a proper understanding of patriotism: the attacks on 9/11, the subsequent war on terror, the election of Donald Trump, and a wave of professional athletes protesting the national anthem. All four, in various ways, have brought the topic of patriotism to the mainstream and deserve to be used as a rationale for discussing the topic.

The September 11 Terrorist Attacks

In the first significant attack on American soil since the surprise attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor, the September 11 terrorist

³⁸ Wilsey, *American Exceptionalism and Civil Religion*, 24.

³⁹ Raymond Haberski Jr., *God and War: American Civil Religion since 1945* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 2012), 5. Haberski states that civil religion is a "hybrid of nationalism and traditional religion" and "has an ideological flexibility that is intoxicating because it is so evocative, elastic, and deceptively complex." Haberski, *God and War*, 5.

⁴⁰ Lienesch, "Contesting Civil Religion," 116; Philip Gorski, *American Covenant: A History of Civil Religion from the Puritans to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 13.

attacks killed 2,986 people from over eighty different countries and reasserted patriotism into American politics. The aftermath of the attacks on September 11, 2001, led to a dramatic upsurge of patriotism in the United States. Until the 9/11 attacks, the single most lethal and deadly terrorist attack had been the attack on the Abadan theater in Iran that killed over four hundred people in 1978.⁴¹ These attacks on the United States brought a stark realization to most Americans: they had been attacked, wounded, and hurt.

The 9/11 attacks were unique because they were seen not just as an American event but one that affected the entire world: it was a global event. Philosopher Jürgen Habermas noted this as significant when he stated that the attacks “could be called the first historic world event in the strictest sense.”⁴² The media pointed out repeatedly that America had come under attack and, as a result, was no longer safe. How would America respond? The attacks on America, while tragic, gave rise to a patriotic narrative that came to dominate the American political landscape that continues largely unchallenged today.⁴³

After the 9/11 attacks, there was a sense of emergency that befell the American people that had not been felt in some years. As Aviel Roshwald notes, the attacks “shook up most Americans’ assumptions about their nation’s place in the world,” which led to a brief feeling of despair but was quickly followed by a robust patriotic response.⁴⁴ The attacks did something to the core of the American public. As commentator Seth Mandel notes, the attacks “posed a discomfiting challenge to the tolerance on which liberal

⁴¹ Tan, *U.S. Strategy against Global Terrorism*, 1–2.

⁴² Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004), 28.

⁴³ Richard Jackson, “The 9/11 Attacks and the Social Construction of a National Narrative,” in *The Impact of 9/11 on the Media, Arts, and Entertainment: The Day That Changed Everything?* ed. Matthew Morgan (New York: Palgrave, 2009), 26–30.

⁴⁴ Aviel Roshwald, *The Endurance of Nationalism: Ancient Roots and Modern Dilemmas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 199.

democracies pride themselves.”⁴⁵ The attacks gave rise to a “conservative shift” that could only be explained by the increased anxiety caused by the attacks.⁴⁶

The time that immediately followed the 9/11 attacks created an unfamiliar set of conditions that tested the different meanings of what it meant to be an American. Patriotism in America, as well as other countries, is often visible in times of catastrophe, emergency, or war; however, before 9/11, America’s national attachment had often been visible in the frequent flying of the American flag in times of peace. Now that the attacks made it clear that America was no longer in a state of peace, American flags waved in a new sense of patriotism. American stores quickly sold out due to this increased notion of patriotism.⁴⁷

From the events of 9/11 until today, the American flag has stood as a symbol of national pride and “primes the core essence of what it means to be an American.”⁴⁸ The tragic events of 9/11 served as a way to bring the national consciousness to a sense of togetherness and unity that had not been seen in recent generations. To be patriotic was to display the flag, and alternatively, not to display the flag was to be seen as unpatriotic. The public display of the American flag became a source of support and strength for the average American by promoting national unity through public displays of patriotism via flying the American flag.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Seth Mandel, “The Failed War on the ‘War on Terror’: Everybody Hates It and It’s Not Going Anywhere,” *Commentary*, November 2013, 19.

⁴⁶ George Bonanno and John Jost, “Conservative Shift among High-Exposure Survivors of the September 11th Attacks,” *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 28 (2006): 311.

⁴⁷ Markus Kemmelmeier and David Winter, “Sowing Patriotism, but Reaping Nationalism? Consequences of Exposure to the American Flag,” *Political Psychology* 29 (2008): 859–860. Phillip Bratta notes that American retailer Walmart sold 116,000 American flags on September 11 and 250,000 on September 12 compared to only 6,400 and 10,000 on the same days the year before. Phillip Bratta, “Flag Display Post-9/11: A Discourse on American Nationalism,” *The Journal of American Culture* 32 (2009): 232.

⁴⁸ Crittendon, “Differentiating Patriotism and Nationalism: Influence of Valence of Primes,” 3.

⁴⁹ Bratta, “Flag Display Post-9/11,” 238.

The War on Terror

The 9/11 attacks suggested that a massive terrorist threat posed a real and existential threat to America and the American ethos. As a result, on September 15, 2001, just days after the 9/11 attacks, President George Bush, in a radio address to the United States, launched “a broad and sustained campaign to secure our country and eradicate the evil of terrorism,” and thus the global war on terror had begun.⁵⁰ A few weeks later, on October 7, the United States, with a coalition of other allies, invaded the country of Afghanistan to root out and destroy the Taliban, a terroristic group who were sought out as architects of the 9/11 attacks. As soon as the culprits were identified, President Bush stated the total defeat of Al-Qaeda and all terrorist groups with global reach to be the primary goal of the United States and her efforts at protecting America.⁵¹ Within a month of 9/11, the United States had carried out attacks on various Taliban and Al-Qaeda bases in the country of Afghanistan and had formally invaded them.

While there were significant national debates about the invasion of Afghanistan, it had broad support from the international community; however, in February 2003, President Bush shifted his philosophy and called for a more “preemptive” approach to the global war on terror.⁵² As a result of this shift, on March 19, 2003, the United States, under orders from President Bush, began phase two of the war on terror by turning his attention toward Saddam Hussein via an invasion of Iraq due to the alleged presence of weapons of mass destruction, which, the American public was told, were to be used in eventual attacks on America. This move was seen as controversial, and in response, much of the same international community that was supportive of the invasion of Afghanistan opposed the invasion of Iraq.⁵³ The invasion was short, ending on April 9, 2003, with the fall of the city of Baghdad.

⁵⁰ Tan, *U.S. Strategy against Global Terrorism*, 2.

⁵¹ Erik Goepner, “Measuring the Effectiveness of America’s War on Terror,” *Parameters* 46 (2016): 108.

⁵² Goepner, “Measuring the Effectiveness of America’s War on Terror,” 107; Tan, *U.S. Strategy against Global Terrorism*, 4.

⁵³ Tan, *U.S. Strategy against Global Terrorism*, 3, 107.

While public displays of the flag decreased in the months after 9/11, they increased with the invasion of Iraq.⁵⁴ The global war on terror helped build the sense of patriotism partly because it was seen in the television viewing habits of many Americans. Not only did Americans see consistent reports of the ongoing efforts on the war on terror, but they were also consistently reminded of it through the efforts of the Bush administration. In the three years following the start of the war on terror, the administration made, on average, through speeches, interviews, and official communications, ten mentions per day of something relating to the war on terror.⁵⁵ In this way, the war on terror was always before Americans, and as a result, the American public was consistently reminded to be patriotic by supporting the troops. To do so was a patriotic duty.

Patriotism contributed to the early support of the war on terror.⁵⁶ Over the past fifteen years, there have been almost ten thousand military personnel killed with almost 2.5 million servicemen and women being sent to fight. Furthermore, there have been over 675,000 disability claims as a result of the war on terror. The prolonged war has become the longest in the history of America. Additionally, trillions of dollars have been added to the American national debt.⁵⁷ The money spent, combined with over 137,000 civilian casualties, has led support for the war on terror to wane despite the patriotic leanings of many Americans.

The Presidency of Donald Trump

A third event that brought the discussion of patriotism to the forefront of American culture was the election of Donald Trump as

⁵⁴ Gerald Webster, "American Nationalism, the Flag, and the Invasion of Iraq," *The Geographical Review* 101 (2011): 14.

⁵⁵ Brigitte Naws, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism: The Central Role of the Media in Terrorism and Counterterrorism* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 148–149.

⁵⁶ Daniel McCleary, et al., "Types of Patriotism as Primary Predictors of Continuing Support for the Iraq War," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 37 (2009): 78.

⁵⁷ Goepner, "Measuring the Effectiveness of America's War on Terror," 107; Joseph Masco, "Auditing the War on Terror: The Watson Institute's Costs of War Project," *American Anthropologist* 115 (2013): 312.

the forty-fifth president of the United States. Running with the campaign slogan “Make America Great Again,” many saw in Trump a politician who was more than patriotic: he was a candidate “for” the people. The “Make America Great Again” slogan popped up everywhere: on hats, posters, social media, and in everyday conversation.

The “Make America Great Again” slogan became one that many perceived as the start of a patriotic—and for some, a nationalist—movement. Trump, from the campaign trail to the White House, used the terms “patriot” and “nationalist” synonymously, thereby keeping the discussion of both patriotism and nationalism at the forefront of political discussion both in America and abroad. For many, Trump’s campaign was widely seen as a part of a nationalist resurgence in the Western world.⁵⁸

In an astonishing victory and upset, Trump was elected the forty-fifth president of the United States. Most analysts gave him no chance of securing the Republican nomination, let alone winning the presidency. In fact, Trump was given a one-hundred-to-one long shot of winning by a popular betting firm when he announced he was running.⁵⁹

One of the critical reasons for Trump’s surprise election was the fact that he received the collective vote of American evangelical voters.⁶⁰ Even though there was a considerable pushback against

⁵⁸ James Antle, “Trump’s Nationalist Moment: Voters Are Speaking up for Country, Border, and Sovereignty,” *The American Conservative* 18, no. 1 (2019): 14.

⁵⁹ Michael Nelson, *Trump’s First Year* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 2018), 5.

⁶⁰ Sarah Bailey, “White Evangelicals Voted Overwhelmingly for Donald Trump,” *Washington Post*, November 9, 2016, [washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/11/09/exit-polls-show-white-evangelicals-voted-overwhelmingly-for-donald-trump/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.9b754341acf1](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/11/09/exit-polls-show-white-evangelicals-voted-overwhelmingly-for-donald-trump/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.9b754341acf1). See also, Jessica Martinez and Gregory Smith, “How the Faithful Voted: A Preliminary 2016 Analysis,” Pew Research, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/how-the-faithful-voted-a-preliminary-2016-analysis/>. For a more comprehensive look at how the votes of American evangelicals helped Trump win the presidency, see Angela Denker, *Red State Christians: Understanding the Voters Who Elected Donald Trump* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2019); Andrew Whitehead, et al., “Make America Christian Again: Christian

Trump during the early period of securing the Republican presidential nomination, eventually, Trump secured the nomination. Additionally, most evangelicals supported Trump as the lesser of two evils in a head-to-head race against Hillary Clinton.⁶¹ While it can be argued this lesser-of-two-evils approach had its merits in a head-to-head race against Hillary Clinton, what about in the primaries? According to some researchers, the reason that so many evangelicals supported Trump from his initial announcement or, at the very least, the early period of his candidacy, was that many of these voters were “Christian nationalists.”⁶²

The Christian nationalist ideology that influences some notion of political discourse is unique in that it calls forth a defense of America through a mythological narrative that connects it directly to a Christian tradition. Therefore, voting for Trump, for many claiming to identify with Christian nationalism, was seen as a “symbolic defense” of the United States and her national heritage.⁶³ These Trump supporters were connecting their vote for him with a particular eschatological view that saw America as a once-great nation that had suffered rapidly under the presidency of a seemingly “un-Christian” and unpatriotic Barack Obama and his “un-American” policies. The only choice, for Christian nationalists, was

Nationalism and Voting for Donald Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election,” *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review* 79 (2018): 147–171.

⁶¹ Philip Gorski, “Why Evangelicals Voted for Trump: A Critical Cultural Sociology,” *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 5 (2017): 340.

⁶² Gorski, “Why Evangelicals Voted for Trump,” 340; Andrew Whitehead, et al., “Make America Christian Again,” 164. According to Philip Gorski, white Christian nationalists who supported Trump had four major characteristics. First, they exhibited signs of racism; second, they believed in a sense of “sacrificialism” where one should sacrifice for the nation; third, they had a sense of “apocalypticism” because they viewed Clinton’s potential election as a disaster that must be avoided at all costs; fourth, they had a sense of “nostalgia” that was most readily identified with the notion of “American exceptionalism.” Gorski, “Why Evangelicals Voted for Trump,” 339–347.

⁶³ Whitehead, et al., “Make America Christian Again,” 147. Also, see Evan Stewart, “Public Religion and the Vote for Donald Trump: Evidence from Panel Data,” paper presented at the American Sociological Association Annual Conference, August 11–14, Philadelphia, PA. Stewart argues that Christian nationalism was among the strongest predictors of voting for Trump.

to wholeheartedly support Trump, because to do so was to secure America's place as a "Christian" nation.⁶⁴

While Americans have almost always considered themselves patriotic, it seems the term "patriotic" has become much more prominent in the media, social commentary, and the life of the church with the election of Trump as the forty-fifth president of the United States. With his promise to make America great, there seems to have been another increase of people claiming, if not flaunting, their patriotism of a seemingly Christian nation.⁶⁵

Professional Athletes' Protesting of the National Anthem

Another issue surrounding patriotism has been the recent development of seeing professional athletes kneel during their respective sports' playing of the national anthem before their games or matches. On August 26, 2016, Colin Kaepernick of the San Francisco 49ers chose not to stand for the playing of the national anthem of a preseason football game and gained immediate national attention for doing so. At first, Kaepernick sat during the national anthem, but after making his reasoning for sitting clear to the media, he began to kneel during the anthem. His reasoning? He was attempting to present his kneeling as a symbolic gesture protesting

⁶⁴ Whitehead, et al. go on to stress that white Christian nationalism "provides a metanarrative for a religiously distinct national identity." Further, white Christian nationalists holding "this narrative and perceive threats to that identity overwhelmingly voted for Trump." Whitehead, et al., "Make America Christian Again," 152, 165. Angela Denker makes the case that Christian nationalism was one of the main reasons that Trump was elected. Denker, *Red State Christians*.

⁶⁵ Andrew Whitehead and Samuel Perry argue that the election of Trump was due to Americans who believed that America was a Christian nation and who saw Trump as a way to ensure the protection of American values. As a result, they argue that "Trumpism" will outlast the Trump presidency because of the way that Trump has transformed the Republican party. Andrew Whitehead and Samuel Perry, "Is a 'Christian America' a More Patriarchal America? Religion, Politics, and Traditionalist Gender Ideology," *Canadian Review of Sociology* 57 (2018): 173.

perceived social injustices in the United States.⁶⁶ In the months before Kaepernick's protest, there were several high profile deaths of African American men at the hands of police, and many athletes found themselves using their status as a way to spotlight the perceived injustices. While these athletes responded by doing interviews, wearing clothes with political messages, and writing editorials, it was Kaepernick who was able to exhibit more influence on these issues due to the media coverage surrounding the National Football League (NFL).⁶⁷ Some have even argued that during this time, Kaepernick has "exerted more influence on American society" than any other popular culture star.⁶⁸

Kaepernick was standing up for his understanding of racial discrimination and police brutality; the quarterback continued to kneel throughout the season stating simply, "I am not looking for approval. I have to stand up for people that are oppressed."⁶⁹ Kaepernick's protest and message grew into something much bigger. By September 2017, more than two hundred NFL players were kneeling, and by 2018, the NFL team owners passed a rule that all players would have to stand for the national anthem or stay in the locker room.⁷⁰ Throughout the 2016 and 2017 NFL seasons, many

⁶⁶ Karen Smeda, "Foul on the Play: Applying Mediation Strategies to Address Social Injustice Protests in the NFL," *Dispute Resolution Journal* 73 (2018): 51.

⁶⁷ Eric Hall, "Policy Point—Counterpoint: Do African American Athletes Have an Obligation to Fight against Racial Injustice?" *International Social Science Review* 93 (2017): 1.

⁶⁸ Sean Gregory, "Colin Kaepernick," *TIME Magazine*, 2017, 100.

⁶⁹ Kofie Yeboah, "A Timeline of Events since Colin Kaepernick's National Anthem Protest," *The Undeclared*, September 6, 2016, theundefeated.com/features/a-timeline-of-events-since-colin-kaepernicks-national-anthem-protest/.

⁷⁰ Austin Knoblauch, "NFL Player Protests Sweep League after President Trump's Hostile Remarks," *USA Today*, September 24, 2017, usatoday.com/story/sports/nfl/2017/09/24/donald-trump-nfl-player-protests-national-anthem-week-3-response/697609001/; Austin Knoblauch, "NFL Expected to Enact National Anthem Policy for 18," *NFL*, nfl.com/news/story/0ap3000000933952/article/nfl-expected-to-enact-national-anthem-policy-for-18.

NFL players showed solidarity with Kaepernick by joining in the protests.⁷¹

However, this political movement split other players and many fans. In a poll during the protests, 47 percent of Americans thought that the athletes should stand during the anthem, while 51 percent thought that there should not be a specific rule requiring them to do so.⁷² Public opinion polls suggested that fans began to boycott the NFL as a result of these protests, and viewership and support of the NFL began to decline.⁷³ Further, it was not just the fans and players that were torn on the issue—many team executives, owners, and coaches were as well. Some supported the athletes' right to protest, while others were silent.⁷⁴

While credited with igniting the recent trend of athletes kneeling during the playing of the national anthem, this is not to say that Kaepernick was the first to bring national attention to political issues. African American runners Tommie Smith and John Carlos famously angered many Americans by raising black-gloved fists while on the podium for winning gold and silver, respectively, in the two-hundred-meter sprint during the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. Many athletes protested during the national anthem in the sixties as a way to protest the war in Vietnam.⁷⁵ Muhammad Ali, one of the most recognized American sports figures of all time, famously protested the war in Vietnam and refused to register for the draft. Ali immediately lost his boxing license and was labeled as unpatriotic and received death threats.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Smeda, "Foul on the Play," 52.

⁷² Gregory, "Colin Kaepernick," 102.

⁷³ Chloe Kaufman, "Speaking about Politics, a Fireable Offense? The Legality of Employee Speech Restrictions in the Entertainment Industry," *Journal of Intellectual Property and Entertainment Law* 8 (2019): 381.

⁷⁴ Smeda, "Foul on the Play," 58.

⁷⁵ Joseph Connor, "Off Key: America's National Anthem was a Lightning Rod for Controversy Long before Colin Kaepernick Stayed in His Seat," *American History* (February 2017): 50. Dave Zirin argues that the sixties and seventies were the "golden age" of political athletes. Dave Zirin, "Taking a Knee," *The Nation* 305 (2017): 3–4.

⁷⁶ Thomas Etan, "What Kaepernick Started: A Former NBA Player Reflects," *The Progressive* (November 2016): 30. Also see Travis Boyce, *Radical*

In much the same way, Kaepernick's protests were perceived as an assault on American patriotism and values. At the same time, Kaepernick brought to the forefront the understanding that American was deeply divided over the issue. While being labeled unpatriotic by many, his cultural icon status rose. While some questioned whether or not he should use his career to protest during the anthem, others called it a "timely" action due to the polarized issues of race relations within the United States.⁷⁷

If Kaepernick lit the match to the discussion through his use of kneeling during the anthem, then Trump poured the gas.⁷⁸ On September 22, 2017, Trump stoked the polarization even further when he said in reference to Kaepernick, "Wouldn't you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, 'Get that son of a [expletive] off the field right now?'" while speaking at a political rally in the very conservative state of Alabama.⁷⁹ The Trump administration also made suggestions that individual on-air employees should be terminated for their role in protesting during the playing of the national anthem.⁸⁰ Trump's comments thrilled not just the conservatives in the audience but his conservative base and sparked a national discussion of what it means to be patriotic.⁸¹

It is not surprising that the protests taking place in the NFL were the ones most responsible for bringing the issue of patriotism to the forefront. The NFL is the professional sport league most

Teacher: A Socialist, Feminist, and Anti-Racist Journal of the Theory and Practice of Teaching 109 (2017): 21–28.

⁷⁷ Boyce, *Radical Teacher*, 23–24.

⁷⁸ Zirin, "Taking a Knee," 3.

⁷⁹ Gregory, "Colin Kaepernick," 102.

⁸⁰ Kaufman, "Speaking about Politics," 408. Kaufman gives an excellent summary of the legal challenges presented in whether or not sports figures have a First Amendment right to protest during the anthem.

⁸¹ Denker argues the issue with Trump and Kaepernick showed that much more was at stake: "Somehow, American pride, Jesus and pigskins got conflated, and the NFL came to represent all that is sacred about the America Trump was elected to represent . . . While the NFL has come to represent conservative patriotism and the sort of 'God and country' Christianity popular across southern and rural America . . . [it] brought to the fore a conflict that was not only about politics and sports but also about religion and about who has the final word on Christianity in America." Denker, *Red State Christians*, 124–126.

correlated with conservative politics.⁸² In 1942, Congress codified rules on rising for the national anthem, and after Japan's surrender in WWII, former NFL commissioner Elmer Layden made clear the NFL's commitment to patriotism and the anthem by saying it should be "as much a part of every game as the kick-off."⁸³ So, for more than a generation, the NFL has been seen through a patriotic lens, at the very least, before kickoff due to the league's commitment to the national anthem.

The issue of patriotism within sports was made more obvious in the months after the 9/11 attacks because sports were seen as a type of political "discourse." Immediately after 9/11, Americans saw sports as a way to escape from the current terrorist threat, and the media helped to fuel this escape. On television, sports exhibited themes communicating the importance of unity and patriotism.⁸⁴ Sports became a way to present a narrative of cultural politics as well as communicating a particular vision of America. For example, in the third game of the World Series of professional baseball, just weeks after the 9/11 attacks, then-president Bush threw out the opening pitch in New York. Wearing a pullover that features the New York Fire Department's logo, Bush's pitch was arguably one of the most significant opening pitches in baseball history. This served as a patriotic moment, inspiring unity but also a belief that things were seemingly getting back to normal in the United States. This moment in sports was significant.

Other moments in sports over the coming months were significant as well. Super Bowl XXXVI, played on February 3, 2002, featured a highly patriotic theme: "Hope, Heroes, and Homeland." Throughout the television broadcast, the Fox Network connected American football with strands of patriotism and nationalism with its ties to the military who were now fighting

⁸² Zirin, "Taking a Knee," 3. For a more comprehensive look at the history of how the pledge of allegiance and national anthem came to be standardized, see Richard Ellis, *To the Flag: The Unlikely History of the Pledge of Allegiance* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005).

⁸³ Connor, "Off Key," 49–50.

⁸⁴ Mark Falcoux and Michael Silk, "Manufacturing Consent: Mediated Sporting Spectacle and the Cultural Politics of the 'War on Terror'," *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics* 1 (2005): 59–60.

overseas in the war on terror. With American flags seen throughout the broadcast and talks from American heroes, it was obvious to all viewers that American pride and unity were strong.⁸⁵

Sports have an almost sacred connotation with Americans, and the ritualism around it feeds this connotation.⁸⁶ Sports have become central to the American culture; it is no surprise athletes have achieved such a prominent role.⁸⁷ When looked at together, athletes and their social influence and the patriotic lens through which much of sports is now looked at post-9/11, it is no wonder that athletes kneeling during the playing of the national anthem are looked at as taboo. Kaepernick (and Trump) have forced the American public to grapple with the difficult questions about patriotism, political protest, and the right to free speech.⁸⁸

Rationale for Research

Due to the contemporary political culture of the United States, there is much polarization on issues of what it means to be an American; and as a result of this polarization, there is much discussion on what it means to be a “patriotic” American. What does being patriotic mean, and is it a character trait that all Americans must have? This contemporary polarization within the American political, social, and ecclesial landscape shows the need for such a discussion.

With so much contemporary discussion on the topics of patriotism due to issues like the continued war on terror, national anthem protests, and even the current president, citizens must have

⁸⁵ Falcous and Silk, “Manufacturing Consent,” 59–61. Additionally, the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 2002 featured athletes along with various members of both NYPD and FDNY. Normally a patriotic event, the opening ceremony was made more somber by the inclusion of an American flag from New York that had survived the 9/11 attacks. This continued to serve as a reminder to the American public that the war on terror was not over.

⁸⁶ For a summary of the connection between ritualism and sporting behavior, see Oscar Fernández and Roberto Cachán-Cruz, “An Assessment of the Dynamic of Religious Ritualism in Sporting Environments,” *Journal of Religious Health* 53 (2014): 1653–1661.

⁸⁷ Hall, “Policy Point,” 8.

⁸⁸ Gregory, “Colin Kaepernick,” 100–102.

a proper understanding of what patriotism is and what it is not. Its connection to the concept of nationalism—which has also become of contemporary importance—also brings a misunderstanding of the term, which makes any discussion of patriotism problematic. Due to the differing understandings and misunderstandings of patriotism, there are different understandings of the loyalties that people should have toward their country. Complicating this is the fact that Christians have been called to be citizens of the kingdom of God.

With this in mind, what is a Christian's responsibility to the state? Does a Christian *have* to be patriotic to be a good citizen of both the nation and the kingdom? Further, where does the church fit into the political discussion of patriotism? These are issues that can only be addressed by considering a biblical assessment of patriotism. These issues do not seem to be going away in contemporary American culture; the need for a biblical assessment of patriotism is great.

Scope of the Project

There is much work needed on the topic of patriotism. Many definitions, understandings, criticisms, and affirmations of patriotism exist. Additionally, patriotism today is often associated with nationalism, which can give it a negative connotation in the public and political square. The American concepts of patriotism run deep into its spiritual and cultural heritage; and as such, a biblical definition of patriotism must exist if the church is to be biblically faithful in an extremely divided culture rather than exist as an extension of American civil religion. This work proposes that patriotism, when properly defined, is a biblical alternative to both nationalism and cosmopolitanism. Patriotism will be shown to have three main characteristics: a sense of loyalty toward a person's particular country, a singular loyalty toward a person's country, and a personal identification with a person's country and culture. These characteristics will form the framework for a biblical understanding of patriotism. A biblically defined patriotism serves the church well as she exists in a politically divided culture; further, it assists to keep her more focused on her mission by keeping her away from merely existing as American civil religion.

The purpose of this book is to define a framework of patriotism in America and to give a proper biblical assessment of it. Because patriotism is so closely connected to nationalism, early work will be done to distinguish the terms from one another. The methodology of this project is: first, to give a brief historical sketch of the contemporary issues surrounding American patriotism and its connection to nationalism; second, a definition of patriotism will be given that will serve in later chapters as a framework for a biblical assessment; third, patriotism will be shown as a biblical alternative to both nationalism and cosmopolitanism, which will be shown to be untenable for the Christian. This framework of patriotism will then be assessed biblically while looking through an American lens.

Chapter 2 will give an assessment of the historical underpinnings of the American conception of patriotism. Because the research on these topics is so vast, special attention will be given to specific periods of American history. Special attention will be given to contemporary influences on political philosophy while looking at the following periods of American history: the Puritan era, the revolutionary period, the constitutional era, the era of the Civil War, World War II, and the Vietnam era.⁸⁹

Chapter 3 will present a biblical definition of patriotism as a loyalty to one's particular country that involves a personal identification with his country, culture, and people. By developing a definition of patriotism that is rooted in loyalty, one can assess and evaluate what a biblical understanding of patriotism entails. Chapter 4 will seek to posit the case that patriotism is a biblical alternative to both nationalism and cosmopolitanism. Building on the work of defining terms and assessing previous literature, this project will show both nationalism and cosmopolitanism as untenable for the Christian leaving patriotism as the proper alternative. Additionally, a summary of the various types of patriotism will be given, which will help show the importance of having a biblical definition. Building on the need for a biblical definition of patriotism, Chapter 4 will give a definition that can be assessed biblically. The definition

⁸⁹ It is beyond the scope of this project to deal with these topics and eras comprehensively, but special care will be given to consider the major points of political writings that are germane to the topic.

will consist of three characteristics. First, patriotism is concerned with love and loyalty toward a person's home country; second, patriotism is concerned with a person's love and loyalty for his home country and not other countries; third, patriotism is concerned with a person's identification with his country and culture. These three characteristics will make up the framework of patriotism and will be looked at biblically throughout the rest of the project.

Chapter 5 will discuss the life and ministry of Paul as a test case of a biblically informed concept of patriotism. Paul, as a Roman citizen, understood what it meant to have loyalty to a country. In this way, Paul will be shown to be a person who understood his role as a citizen of a state while also being a citizen of the kingdom of God. Chapter 6 will consider contemporary issues regarding patriotism for the American church and give practical conclusions and further areas of study. Finally, Chapter 7 will give a summary of the main thesis and takeaways from each chapter.

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