Chapter 2

POWER

"Don't forget your flag!" a kindly, silver-haired woman reminded attendees meandering toward the sanctuary doors. Many were understandably a bit distracted. The cavernous lobby of First Baptist Dallas, which normally looked like that of a nondescript convention center, had been converted into a dazzling spectacle of patriotic symbolism, its columns festooned from floor to ceiling with balloons of red, white, and blue. Civilian attendees were decked out in stars and stripes, while military veterans were in full dress uniform. A veritable army of smiling ushers passed out American flags as we filed into the sanctuary. The much-advertised "Freedom Sunday" service at the 10,000 member megachurch was a finely woven tapestry of Christian nationalism. There were patriotic hymns (e.g., "When the Saints Go Marching In," "The Battle Hymn of the Republic") accompanied by pyrotechnics and lasers, throughout which attendees enthusiastically waved their little flags. There were prayers from army chaplains. There was a call to recognize veterans in attendance. A choir performed the "Armed Forces Medley," recognizing each branch of the military.

All these coordinated elements were ultimately building toward the crescendo of the service—pastor Robert Jeffress's controversially titled message, "America is a Christian Nation." Jeffress preceded his sermon by reading a letter from Vice President Mike Pence, which Jeffress said he had received the day before. Pence offered encouragement and commended the worshippers: "As President Trump and I both know, America's strength ultimately comes from our freedom and from the foundation of faith in this nation. We know that no podium we ever stand behind will be as important as the pulpits that pastors stand

behind every Sunday. And no policy we ever advance will be as important as the message that you faithfully carry—a message of hope that is changing lives." After reading the letter, Jeffress asked his audience, "Aren't you glad we have a man like Mike Pence standing behind our great president Donald Trump?!" The crowd responded with uproarious applause.

The service's program contained a detailed outline of Jeffress's sermon, including a litany of quotes he would draw upon. He began by presenting two competing narratives about the country's founding:

> Listen long enough to organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union or the Freedom from Religion Foundation or any other left-wing group and you will come to believe this history of America: that America was founded by men of a wide diversity of religious beliefs, some deists, some atheists, and a few Christians. But they were all united by one dream: they wanted to build a completely secular nation that was devoid of any religious, especially Christian, influence. Their goal was to build an unscalable wall around this country that would protect this country from any religious influence seeping into public life.

The purpose of such narratives, according to Jeffress, is political, not historical. "*That* version of American history," Jeffress quickly assured his audience, "belongs in the same category as the story of George Washington and the cherry tree. It is a complete myth." Instead, Jeffress put forth an alternative narrative, one he would spend the entire sermon defending:

> America was founded predominantly, not exclusively, but predominantly, by Christians who wanted to build a Christian nation on the foundation of God's will [interrupted by applause]. And furthermore, these men believed that the future success of our country depended on our fidelity to the Christian beliefs. And that's why we can say, though it's politically incorrect to do so, we say without hesitation or apology that America was founded as a *Christian* nation [pounds pulpit], and

> our future success depends on our country being faithful to those eternal truths of God's word [thunderous applause].

The remaining 45 minutes of the sermon included no key biblical text—rare for a conservative Protestant expositor like Jeffress. Instead, he leaned almost exclusively on quotes from "founding fathers," founding documents, and court decisions, all ostensibly suggesting the centrality of (evangelical) Christianity to America's core identity. But *that* America is under attack, Jeffress explained. In the final few minutes, he recounted how "secular Supreme Court justices" in the early 1960s had removed prayer and Bible reading from public schools. This led inexorably to a retreat from America's founding, biblical ideals. Instead, Jeffress argued, we are spiraling toward a dystopian future of homicide, single-parent households, and sexual depravity. As he wrapped up his message, Jeffress called his listeners to action:

> Now here's the question: What has changed? In these hundred and fifty years has the Constitution changed and nobody told us? Is that what happened? Of course not. What has happened is we've allowed the secularists, the humanists, the atheists, the infidels to pervert our Constitution into something our founding fathers never intended. And it is time for Americans to stand up and say, "Enough! We're not going to allow this in our Christian country anymore!" It is time to put an end to this.

This was in fact the *only* point of application in the entire sermon. No pleas for personal piety. No calls to be "good Samaritans" to our neighbors. Rather, faithful Christians must stand up and confront the "secularists," "humanists," "atheists," and "infidels" who are taking control of "*our* Christian country."

This Land Is Our Land

Twenty years ago sociologist Christian Smith argued that scholars and journalists had got white evangelicals all wrong—specifically, those

evangelicals who were seemingly sympathetic to Christian nationalist rhetoric and ideals. First and foremost, Smith explained, white evangelicals are not a monolithic group. They hold diverse opinions about the nation's Christian heritage and should not be stereotyped as staunch Christian nationalists. But more than this, Smith argued, the use of "Christian nation" language, for most rank and file evangelicals, was not intended to mobilize *political* action, but to shore up their identity *as Christians* and to mobilize *religious* action. Their primary interest is not to "take America back for God" through political force, but simply to live as faithful Christians, redeeming their increasingly secular society through interpersonal influence. While certain evangelical elites and events—like Robert Jeffress and similar "Freedom Sunday" services—may have partisan goals in mind, Smith concluded that those sorts of rallying calls to political action ultimately had little influence in believers' lives.[1]

To some degree, we think Smith was correct. Average evangelicals in the pews have diverse views. Many who are amenable to the narrative of America being "founded on Christian principles," like many Accommodators we met, are more concerned with religious faithfulness than political power. But while Smith was careful to argue that not all evangelicals are Christian nationalists, he failed to point out that not all Christian nationalists are evangelicals. This has led to some unfortunate conceptual confusion. As we have shown, nearly half (45 percent) of "Ambassadors," those who are most favorable toward Christian nationalism, are not white evangelicals. More than 15 percent are black Protestants, Jewish, unaffiliated, or of a non-Christian faith. Christian nationalism, simply put, is not an exclusively evangelical ideology. It exists independently.[2]

Herein lies the potential misunderstanding: while many white evangelicals, as Christian Smith argued, may indeed often have *religious* goals in mind when they appeal to a "Christian nation" narrative—though we think Smith may underestimate white evangelicals' collective desire to protect their cultural-political turf—evangelicalism is not synonymous with Christian nationalism. Rather, those Americans who adhere most strongly to Christian nationalist ideals have *political*

interests primarily in mind. Religious interests rank second, if they rank at all. Like Jeffress's sermon suggests, faithfulness to "our Christian country," in the minds of Ambassadors and many Accommodators, has little to do with personal piety; it is about political influence. That is because Christian nationalism is rooted in claims about who "we" are as a people and, more importantly, whose preferences should be reflected in "our" cultural symbols and implemented in "our" public policies.[3] Christian identity may play a part in that, but it is only a part. In this chapter we examine how Christian nationalism powerfully and uniquely influences Americans' political attitudes and activity in ways that are (1) above and beyond theological and political conservatism as traditionally measured, and (2) often diametrically opposed to Christian ethics.

For The Love of God, Why Trump?

The 2016 Election

Most Americans were surprised at the outcome of the 2016 presidential election, even Donald Trump.[4] While national polls were quite accurate in predicting a slight edge to Clinton in the popular vote (where she met expectations), statewide polls were less precise.[5] This was especially true in areas dominated by white, non-college-educated voters. Vote analyses show that Trump's narrow victories in a handful of counties in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania were why he was able to secure the necessary electoral college votes to ultimately win the election.[6] Soon after his victory, a barrage of columns, op-eds, and studies tried to determine the various reasons why that particular population of Americans—a considerable number of whom had voted for Obama in the two previous elections—helped put Donald Trump in the White House. A number of initial explanations appeared, often emphasizing single factors. Some stressed economic anxiety. Some racism or xenophobia. Others, sexism. And still others culture war factors like religious freedom, homophobia, or abortion.[7] Uniting these seemingly disparate explanations is the thread of *insecurity*—economic

to some extent, but mostly cultural and political. Essentially, those in a traditionally high-status or dominant group (white Christian males in particular) who perceived a certain degree of threat to their status by some minority group (e.g., racial minorities, immigrants, Muslims, feminists, the LGBTQ community, secular elites) were much more likely to vote for Trump.[8]

But a more interesting storyline emerged in the media regarding who put Trump in the White House, namely, the role of white evangelical Christians. Though initially reluctant to support Trump as a candidate—in mid-2015 Trump's favorability ratings among white evangelicals hovered between 39 and 49 percent—once it was clear he would win the Republican nomination in mid-2016, those numbers began to climb.[9] It seemed the primary narrative in the coverage of Trump support among evangelicals was the hypocrisy angle. Why would white evangelical Christians, who had historically emphasized family values and pious devotion among their leaders, vote in such overwhelming numbers for a thrice-married, adulterous, unrepentant, self-styled playboy billionaire?

Indeed, white evangelical support for Trump seemed completely impervious to any new revelations about his moral character. When *The Washington Post* published an audio recording that captured candidate Trump boasting that he could kiss beautiful women without their invitation and "grab them by the pussy," many believed his chances of winning the election would plummet. Surely white evangelical Christians who had long emphasized voting for family-values candidates would withdraw support from Trump.[10] Soon after, however, Jerry Falwell Jr., the president of Liberty University—one of the largest Christian universities in the United States—defended Trump on national television. Reminding viewers that "we're all sinners," Falwell said he still believed Trump was "the best qualified to be President of the United States."[11] Similarly, Wayne Grudem, a widely respected evangelical theologian, echoed Falwell. While denouncing Trump's lewd remark, Grudem argued that being able to vote for Trump was an "answer to our prayers that [God] would deliver us from the increasing opposition to Christian values brought on by the Democratic Party and the

Obama administration."[12] Grudem's thoughts clearly reflected those of many white evangelicals. The day after the presidential election, *The New York Times* exit polls indicated that some 80 percent of voters who identified as white evangelical or born-again Christians ultimately voted for Trump over Hilary Clinton.[13]

But is religion's influence on the 2016 election as straightforward as "white evangelicals put Trump in the White House?" We think a better explanation of what happened in 2016 can be found in the cultural framework many Americans—evangelical or not—happen to share: Christian nationalism.[14] With the 2017 Baylor Religion Survey (BRS) we can rank the relative influence of the most popular explanations for why Americans voted for Donald Trump—such as economic dissatisfaction, racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, sexism, being an evangelical—alongside our Christian nationalism measures. First, the two strongest factors in predicting who voted for Trump were self-identifying as a Republican and as a political conservative. This should be unsurprising, as most Americans vote with their political tribe rather than for specific candidates or issues.[15] The next two strongest predictors of voting Trump, however, were Islamophobia and Christian nationalism. Figure 2.1 shows the percentage of Americans within each

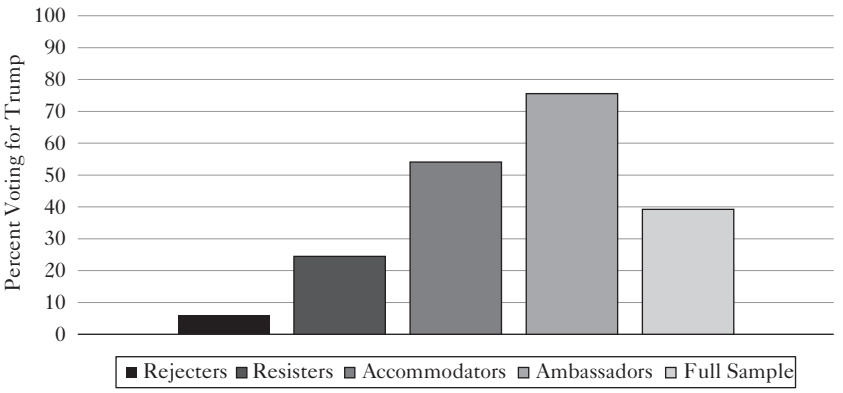

Figure 2.1.
Voting for Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election Across Ambassadors, Accommodators, Resisters, and Rejecters
Source: 2017 Baylor Religion Survey.

orientation to Christian nationalism who voted for Trump. It is clear that support for Trump among Ambassadors was greater than among Resisters or Rejecters. In fact, even when we account for a host of demographic measures, political party and political ideology, various measures of religion, and the handful of cultural explanations like economic dissatisfaction, Islamophobia, racism, xenophobia, or sexism that we mentioned above, Christian nationalism is still a significant and powerful predictor of voting for Trump.[16] To put this in perspective, two people could both be from the same region of the country, worship in the same denomination, identify with the same political party, but still significantly diverge in their likelihood of voting for Trump depending on their orientation toward Christian nationalism.

But perhaps what is just as significant is the fact that affiliating with evangelicalism, believing in a literal Bible, or even Americans' frequency of religious practice were all *unrelated* to voting for Donald Trump. Christian nationalism, in other words, explained almost all of the "religious vote" for Trump. In fact, Christian nationalism influenced the Trump vote across other social categories including Christian traditions, political parties, levels of education, or particular regions of the country (see Table 2.1). While on the whole more evangelicals than Catholics voted for Trump, many fewer evangelicals who are Resisters (32.8 percent) or Rejecters (27.3 percent) voted for Trump than Catholics who are Ambassadors (78.9 percent) or Accommodators (55.4 percent). While Republicans and Democrats were quite fixed in whether they voted for Trump, we see that for Independents, whether they were an Ambassador (78 percent), Accommodator (51 percent), Resister (27.6 percent), or Rejecter (11 percent) mattered a great deal.

But how exactly does Christian nationalism animate support for Trump? While Trump repeatedly and transparently pandered to voters when discussing America's Christian heritage during the campaign, we believe Christian nationalism stands for more than a mere pining to recognize America's religious heritage. One fascinating finding from our analyses of Trump support in the 2017 BRS is that Christian nationalism seemed to influence Americans to vote for Trump *through*

Table 2.1. Percent of Ambassadors, Accommodators, Resisters, and Rejecters Who Voted for Trump by Religious Tradition, Political Party, Education, and White Rurality

	Ambassador	Accommodator	Resister	Rejecter	Full Sample
Evangelical Protestant	85.7	59.6	32.8	27.3	63.1
Mainline Protestant	83.7	54.8	26.6	0	40.2
Catholic	78.9	55.4	21.7	4.4	42.3
Republican	92.0	88.7	75.0	30.7	86.1
Independent	78.1	51.1	27.6	11.4	36.9
Democrat	16.1	7.5	4.5	0	4.3
Bachelor's degree or more	81.0	56.9	14.7	4.4	28.9
White & rural	86.8	62.5	35.9	26.8	58.9

Source: 2017 Baylor Religion Survey.

its connection to other factors like Islamophobia and prejudice toward Mexican immigrants. In other words, for many Americans, Christian nationalism captures a cultural vision of whose country the United States *really* is ("ours"), and consequently who are the "others" or "outsiders" ("Muslim terrorists" and "violent Mexican immigrants"). Americans who sensed a threat in the form of ethnic and religious outsiders encroaching on their privileged position most likely envisioned a Trump presidency as a "return" to a better time. He would make America great again by making it *their* America again—at least for a little while longer.[17]

Speaking to Trump voters allowed us to see how explicit Christian nationalism could often hide more subtle prejudices.[18] Matthew is a married father of three in his late thirties. A Texas native and a staunch supporter of a border wall with Mexico, Matthew said that he would

have preferred a more squarely evangelical candidate, but nonetheless threw his enthusiastic support behind Trump and still supports him today. Listing the reasons he voted for Trump, Matthew explained, "I saw [Trump] as the best, only option to hold to America's traditional Christian identity. I see America's traditional Christian identity as the only thing that has made America *America*. It also made Western Civilization. But America more strongly and for longer embraced Judeo-Christian principles and so has enjoyed greater freedom and prosperity than any other Western country."

Matthew contrasted this vision of America's identity and heritage—the preservation of which he sees as essential to civilization and prosperity—with Obama's subtle efforts to remove Christianity's influence.

> I saw Obama as trying to remove our Christian foundation, not necessarily the values. Obama made very clear that we are not a Christian nation and at the same time repeatedly applauded all the contributions of Muslims and Islam . . . There is a video of Obama basically making fun of those that believe the Bible. He quotes a passage and then says "people haven't been reading their Bibles" because the Bible says this and it doesn't work if we live that way. Which to me just shows that he doesn't understand the Bible.

Other Ambassadors of Christian nationalism shared similar thoughts. David, a 58-year-old from the Midwest, shared that Trump is "standing up for the Christian faith, Christian believers. He's bringing our country back to the way it should be." David's quote underscores his belief that the United States was moving away from this ideal in recent years. He also believes that Hillary Clinton would have continued to move the United States from its founding principles, that she was more "about control and socialism rather than individual freedoms and rights."

Returning to his explanation for why he voted for Trump, Matthew stressed the need to return America to her Christian foundations, lest it become corrupted like *other* nations. "An embrace of the Bible and Christian values created a country that millions from all over the world

have flocked to. But people don't realize that if we throw off Christianity and instead embrace the values of the countries they have fled from, we will cease to be 'America' and instead will become like the countries they have fled from." In Matthew's view, "America" is defined by its Christian cultural values. And these Christian values—unless corrupted by external influences—are static because they are based on the unchanging Bible. Matthew also assumes other countries' values (likely by virtue of them simply being *other* countries) are not Christian, and thus inferior. Interestingly, however, Matthew does not consider the possibility that the values of other nations might somehow augment or improve America's core values. Rather, he sees the situation in terms of purity and corruption. To embrace the cultural values of other nations is inherently polluting, making our society just like the societies from which refugees flee. In light of the context of our conversation—which included immigration, border walls, and terrorism—Matthew's reference to nations from which refugees "have fled" almost certainly denotes Muslim-majority countries and Latin American countries.

Ambassadors and Accommodators like Matthew specifically saw in Trump an opportunity not only to restore their political and cultural influence, which they felt was threatened under Obama, but to fortify America's supremacy among other nations, which they believed to be rooted in fidelity to Christian principles and values. As Trump advisor and televangelist Paula White wrote, "What makes America great is that we were founded [as] a Judeo-Christian nation. That's very important for us to understand. He [Trump] understands it. It is personal to him . . . you will not understand democracy if you don't understand the biblical foundations and traditions and foundation of Christianity and of our faith."[19] According to White, Trump always knew that making America great again necessarily begins by making it Christian again.

Why Do White Evangelicals Keep Supporting Trump?

Understanding Christian nationalism's role in the 2016 election also gives us insight into the continued support for President Trump throughout his presidency. Despite a number of scandals and recurring

instances of behavior that do not align with traditional Christian values, a significant minority of Americans still strongly approve of Trump. This is especially true among white conservative Christians.[20] At the time of Trump's inauguration, his approval among white evangelicals was 74 percent, and through the first year of his presidency it hovered between 65 and 75 percent. Despite a number of episodes that many thought could crater white evangelicals' support, nothing Trump says or does seems to move the needle. For example, in their Summer 2018 polls, both Pew Research Center and Gallup independently reported that 68 percent of white evangelicals approve of the way Trump is handling his job as president. A Fall 2018 Public Religion Research Institute poll had Trump's approval among white evangelicals at 71 percent.[21]

Knowing that "evangelical" support for Trump is more explicitly about Christian nationalism helps make sense of these trends. It also helps us understand the rhetoric of Trump's most vocal evangelical supporters. For instance, in early 2018 the news broke that right before the 2016 election, Stormy Daniels, an adult film actress, was paid $130,000 to stay silent about an alleged affair she had with Trump in 2006, four months after Trump's wife Melania gave birth to their son. Responding to these allegations of lurid affairs and hush-money payoffs, the Reverend Franklin Graham, president and CEO of Samaritan's Purse and son of famed evangelist Billy Graham, defended Trump. Admitting that he did not want Trump to be "pastor of this nation," he stressed, "But I appreciate the fact that [Trump] does have a concern for Christian values, he does have a concern to protect Christians." And, he added, "I appreciate the fact that he protects religious liberty and freedom."[22] Tony Perkins, former politician and head of The Family Research Council—a powerful evangelical lobbying group—also defended Trump, declaring that he and other conservative Christians were giving Trump a "mulligan" on these and other past sins. His justification was telling. "[Conservative Christians] were tired of getting kicked around by Barack Obama and his leftists. And I think they are finally glad that there's somebody on the playground that is willing to punch the bully." Asked about "turning the other cheek," Perkins replied, "You know, we only have two cheeks.

Look, Christianity is not all about being a welcome mat which people can just stomp their feet on."[23]

These defenses of Trump have nothing to do with defending Christian morality—just the opposite, it would seem. For Ambassadors and Accommodators, if Trump (or other politicians) can espouse Christian nationalist rhetoric and signal their willingness to restore conservative Christian influence in American cultural and political life, personal piety is of little concern. For Christian nationalists, the ends justify the means. We saw this in our interviews as well. Many people we spoke with expressed some misgivings about the things they hear about Trump, while maintaining he is still doing what is right for America. Brandon, an Accommodator and lifelong Southerner remarked, "I don't like his antics. I don't like the way he talks. Behind the scenes, I think he means well. I think he's trying to do good things for our country, putting us first . . . I do believe somewhere in there he's got a good heart and he does mean well." Others chalked up the negativity to "fake news," or said that Trump is being persecuted by those who don't like what he's trying to do.

How can we be sure Christian nationalism is the cognitive mechanism linking white evangelicals to Trump support? There are two ways. First, even when we remove the effects of race and religious affiliation, Christian nationalism predicts voting for Trump.[24] This means that it isn't the difference between being an evangelical and any other religious affiliation that truly matters. Rather, it is the degree to which Americans differ in their orientation toward Christian nationalism. It is the fact that there are more Ambassadors and Accommodators among white evangelicals that creates those differences between religious traditions.

Second, when we break down white evangelicals by their adherence to Christian nationalism (Figure 2.2), it is the Ambassadors and Accommodators who overwhelmingly supported Trump, not the Rejecters or Resisters. Similar to the findings in Table 2.1 where there is significant variation within each religious tradition across the four Christian nationalism groups, here again we see that preference for Christian nationalism matters a great deal. David, an Ambassador and white evangelical Christian, told us that, "I voted for the man, and

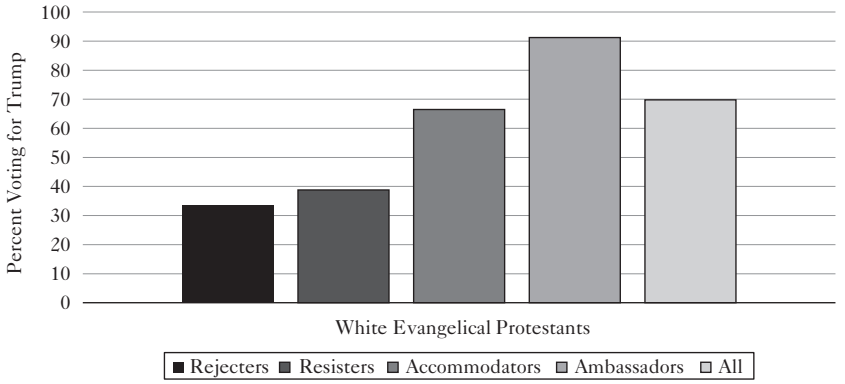

FIGURE 2.2.
Voting for Trump Among White Evangelical Protestants Across Ambassadors, Accommodators, Resisters, and Rejecters
Source: 2017 Baylor Religion Survey.

I'll vote for him tomorrow if I had to. I'm loving what he's doing. I'll support him for as long as he's going to be running for office." David believes Trump is returning America to its Christian roots, and that is why he supports him. But white evangelicals who were Resisters or Rejecters held a decidedly different opinion of Trump. Rick, a white evangelical Christian and Rejecter, stated simply, "I think very little of President Trump. I think he's evil. I think he's full of himself, I think he is selfish, I think he's hateful. And it blows my mind, I think it's self-evident. I've never had to argue with people trying to convince them of something that I just think is self-evident and they just can't see it. That's what frustrating." Clint is a white evangelical pastor who is a Rejecter. He similarly questioned how professing Christians could tolerate Trump's behavior at all.

> When you've got a president who has publicly said things. These aren't behind the scenes, I'm not sure what he's going into as he's thinking about voting on policy. He's *publicly* said things, like the "grab your pussy" stuff and just has not conducted himself as a gentleman. I don't expect Trump to have the charisma that Obama had or whatever, but there is a certain amount of just overt kind of terrible behavior . . . just

> awful things. I don't see how a Christian could . . . for a Christian to look at those things and give [Trump] a pass on that, to me, demonstrates a real amount of suppression of your ethical instincts . . . Either you just don't have them or you're suppressing them because you can't bear to think of Bernie Sanders being president or whatever.

Being an evangelical does not draw Rick or Clint toward Trump. On the contrary, they are offended by Trump's behavior *as Christians*. And Clint believes that professing Christians may either be lacking Christian values entirely or intentionally suppressing them to ensure that someone more committed to restoring their cultural power remains in office. The evidence says as much. Simply put, when it comes to Trump support, speaking in terms of Ambassadors and Accommodators, Resisters and Rejecters, is much more accurate than speaking in terms of "white evangelicals."

The Swirling Vortex of "Trumpolitics" and Christian Nationalism

Ambassadors, Accommodators, Resisters, and Rejecters all play key roles in understanding Trump's win in 2016 and the support he continues to enjoy. Christian nationalism not only describes a set of views Americans have about their national history; it powerfully predicts their voting behavior. But, as in any election, policies matter, too. "Trumpolitics," or Trump's populist strategy to target a core set of controversial political issues to mobilize his base, continues to play an important role in explaining Trump support. Looking at four such issues, we argue that their connection to Trump travels through Christian nationalism.[25]

Travel Bans, Refugees from the Middle East, and Terrorism

The geopolitical realities of the Middle East are incredibly complicated. The United States is involved in several conflicts in the region, and the

war in Iraq now nears its third decade. These wars have resulted in some changes in leadership but have proved costly both in terms of civilian and military lives and in investment. Following the vacuum of leadership resulting from the destabilization of governments and institutions in Libya, Yemen, and Syria, the slew of civil wars and atrocities visited on those living in these regions created the worst refugee crisis in Europe since World War II. Millions of civilians fled the carnage in an effort to gain asylum and some semblance of peace. While many reached Europe, thousands of refugees perished in route; others fell victim to human traffickers. The refugees that survive this trip have not always been welcomed with open arms into various European countries or the United States. While thousands of refugees have been resettled, just as many have been turned away. The argument over how many refugees from the Middle East the United States should accept, or even if they should be allowed to resettle here at all, has been a key political issue since the 2016 election.

During the campaign, Trump and others repeatedly claimed that accepting refugees from the Middle East put Americans at a greater risk of terrorism. As former congresswoman and proponent of Christian nationalism Michele Bachmann claimed, "We bring in all these refugees . . . the largest pipeline for bringing Muslims into the United States. We know, without a doubt, that there is an intentional invasion and an effort to bring radical Islam into the United States . . . the more legislation that we put in to stop all of this immigration from terrorist-oriented countries the American people will say, 'Thank you. It's about time.' "[26] As a candidate, Trump promised that refugees and immigrants from places like Syria and Libya (both Muslim-majority countries) would be denied entry. Trump also suggested screening tests that would include "ideological certification" to ensure that immigrants "share our values and love our people."[27] It was thus unsurprising that soon after he was elected Trump drastically reduced the number of refugees who would be admitted to the United States and issued several executive orders and travel bans aimed at countries that were for the most part majority Muslim.[28]

Trump's continued warnings against refugees, especially those from the Middle East, do not fall on deaf ears. Pairing his promises to restore the cultural and political fortunes of conservative Christians with outright opposition toward cultural outsiders resonates with Ambassadors and Accommodators. Figure 2.3 shows that a greater percentage of Americans in these two groups agree that refugees from the Middle East pose a terrorist threat to the United States. Even when we account for political party and ideology, a host of socio-demographics, and religiosity, the probability of agreeing that refugees from the Middle East pose a terrorism threat increases in lockstep with Christian nationalism.[29]

In fact, across the four orientations to Christian nationalism, beliefs about refugees from the Middle East reveal stark differences between even those Americans who tend to be more supportive of Christian nationalism (Ambassadors and Accommodators) and those who tend to oppose it (Rejecters and Resisters).[30] Just as with Trump support in general, evangelicals who do not adhere to Christian nationalism seem to hold completely different views about Muslim refugees. As Deb, an evangelical and Resister pointed out, "If we were truly a 'Christian nation,' we would be welcoming refugees."

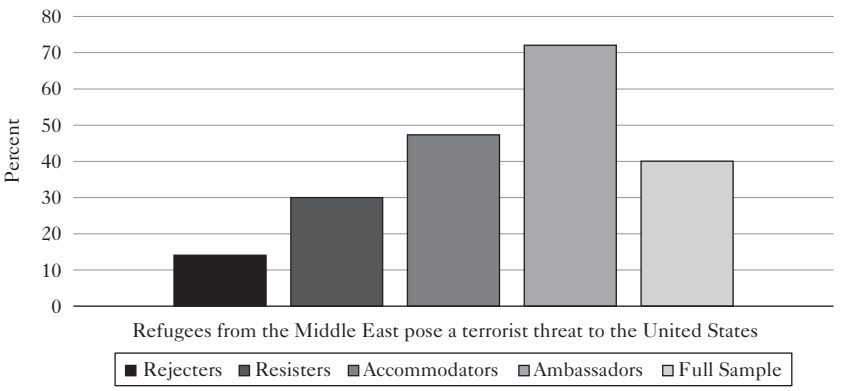

Figure 2.3.
Variation in Americans' Agreement with Fear of Muslim Refugees for Ambassadors, Accommodators, Resisters, and Rejecters
Sources: 2017 Baylor Religion Survey.

Christian nationalism also helps us understand why Trump supporters would be so enthusiastic about the idea of imposing a travel ban that not only disproportionately affects Muslims abroad but also impacts American Muslims. These individuals may have family they are now unable to see or who fear that they cannot go back home lest they be denied reentry into the country. Simply put, Americans who adhere more strongly to Christian nationalism are generally more comfortable with restricting the political freedoms and civil liberties of Muslims, whom they deem as a threat to social order.[31] The 2014 General Social Survey (GSS) includes three questions about the extent to which Americans would allow a Muslim clergyman who is openly hostile to the United States to make a public speech, teach at a university, or have a book in a public library. The survey also includes a question about how important Americans feel being a Christian is to being "truly American" (see Figure 2.4). Clearly, as Americans more strongly equate Christian identity with American civic belonging, their willingness to deny the free speech of hostile Muslims increases considerably. Also important, being an evangelical Protestant, a Republican, or political conservative had no discernable influence on any of these attitudes—only Christian nationalism does.[32]

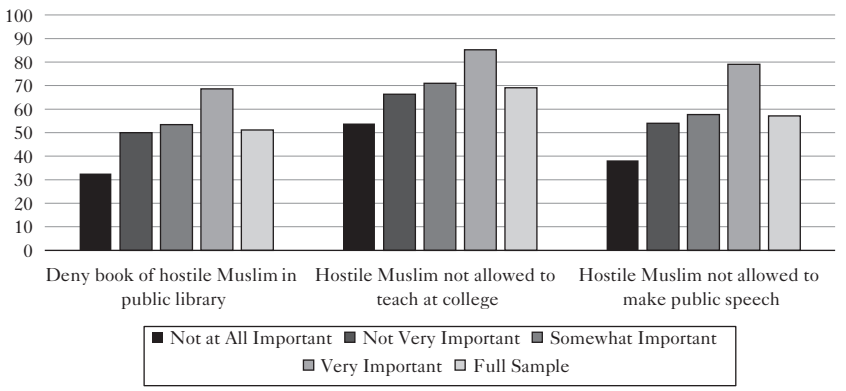

FIGURE 2.4.
Percent Who Would Deny Free Speech to Hostile Muslim Clergymen by How Important Americans Think Being a Christian Is to Being Truly American

Source: 2014 General Social Survey.

What do these findings mean in relation to support for Trumpolitics? It shows that preying on fear regarding terrorism and refugees from the Middle East is ultimately one part of a winning political strategy. Ambassadors and Accommodators are especially drawn to this narrative. Before the 2018 midterm elections, Trump referenced "Middle Easterners" as part of the threat of a migrant caravan that was making its way to the United States–Mexico border. Even though Trump's claim that refugees are a terror threat is objectively false—since 1980 not one person accepted as a refugee has even been implicated in a terror attack—the fears of cultural warfare persist. Even though close to one-third of refugees from the Middle East are actually Christians fleeing persecution, Trump and others believe that the refugee program could operate as a "Trojan horse" for terrorists. The objective realities regarding the terror threat associated with refugees from the Middle East will likely do little to sway the minds of those more committed to Christian nationalism.[33]

The United States Supreme Court and *Roe v. Wade*

From the late 1970s until today, perhaps no other issue has activated religious conservatives as powerfully and consistently as the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion across the United States. This wasn't always the case. As numerous historians have shown, abortion was not a vital voting issue for many evangelicals before the rise of the Religious Right in 1979.[34] However, for the last four decades abortion has been a wedge issue. In the lead-up to the 2016 presidential election, Trump and his conservative Christian supporters routinely pointed to the Supreme Court vacancy as of paramount importance. In an interview with Christian television personality Pat Robertson, a noted promoter of Christian nationalism, Trump warned, "If we don't win this election . . . you'll have a whole different Supreme Court structure."[35]

The underlying reason the Supreme Court vacancy was so important, and why the Supreme Court is always at the forefront of the minds of those on the Christian Right in particular is that it is seen as the place where far-reaching decisions are made. These decisions

can either defend a status quo that historically placed white, Christian men at the top of the social order, or it can progressively chip away at that order. Christian nationalists like political operative David Barton, former Republican congresswoman Michele Bachmann, and pastor Robert Jeffress above have long blamed secular, "activist judges" on the Supreme Court for progressive decisions on mandatory prayer and Bible reading in public schools, abortion, and most recently gay marriage.[36] Similarly, founder and former president of Focus on the Family James Dobson recalled that *Roe v. Wade* was put into place by "unelected, unaccountable, and imperialistic judges."[37] Predictably, Americans who share the beliefs of Barton, Bachmann, Jeffress, and Dobson are often quite suspicious of the Supreme Court. In the 2014 GSS, for example, we find that the more someone equates Christian identity with being "truly American," the less confidence they have in the Supreme Court.

Seeing the opportunity to shift the balance of power on the Supreme Court in 2016, Christian Right leaders stressed its importance. Dobson, for example, claimed that, "The next president will nominate perhaps three or more justices whose judicial philosophy will shape our country for generations to come." Evangelical theologian Wayne Grudem claimed that with Clinton as president the Supreme Court would be stocked with liberal judges who would "systematically impose every liberal policy on the nation," including striking down the ban on partial-birth abortion.[38] The Ambassadors we talked to felt similarly. Stanley, an Ambassador living in the South, shared, "The only thing I came to grips with voting that way [for Trump], versus the other [for Clinton] . . . it's around Supreme Court justice seats. That's what it came down to, for me." His choice was almost entirely about *Roe v. Wade*. "That court [the Supreme Court] has, in our world today, some of the biggest power . . . things ongoing for generations to come. *Roe v. Wade* was a big one, because I think that's going to be . . . our generation's slavery. We're just sitting here, and thousands and thousands of lives are being lost."

But as these quotes suggest, the connection between Trump support and concerns about abortion law are not entirely religious. Americans'

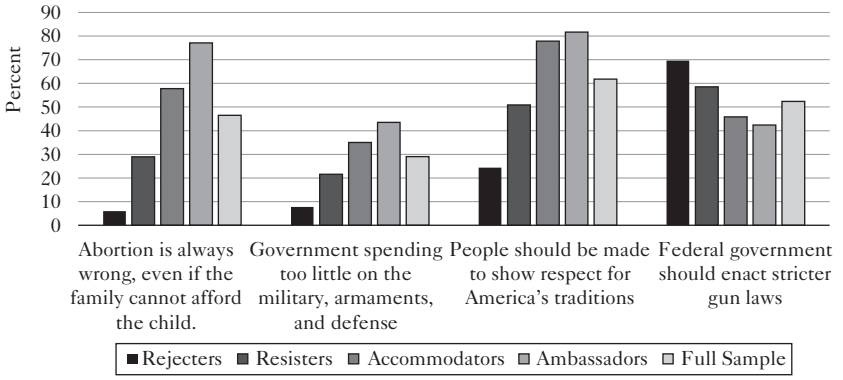

Figure 2.5.
Variations in Americans' Agreement with Additional Trumpolitics across Ambassadors, Accommodators, Resisters, and Rejecters
Source: 2017 Baylor Religion Survey.

views about abortion vary widely depending on whether they are a Rejecter, Resister, Accommodator, or Ambassador, *even after* we account for their level of religiosity, religious affiliation, beliefs about the Bible, and their political leanings. In fact, when we examine Americans' support for abortion in cases where the family cannot afford to raise a child (see Figure 2.5), only religious commitment is more predictive of their views than Christian nationalism.[39]

We also examined Americans' views toward abortion across a number of circumstances and how important they feel being a Christian is to being "truly American" using the 2014 GSS (see Figure 2.6). Yet again, as Americans more strongly equate Christian identity with American civic belonging their opposition to abortion increases no matter the situation, even when we account for all other explanations. Interestingly, the only time this isn't true is when the mother's health is in serious danger—Christian nationalism is unrelated. Americans' political ideology and attendance at religious services are the most important predictors in this instance. For all other situations, though, Christian nationalism was consistently one of the strongest predictors.[40]

So why would Christian nationalism still influence abortion attitudes even after the usual suspects like religiosity and political ideology have

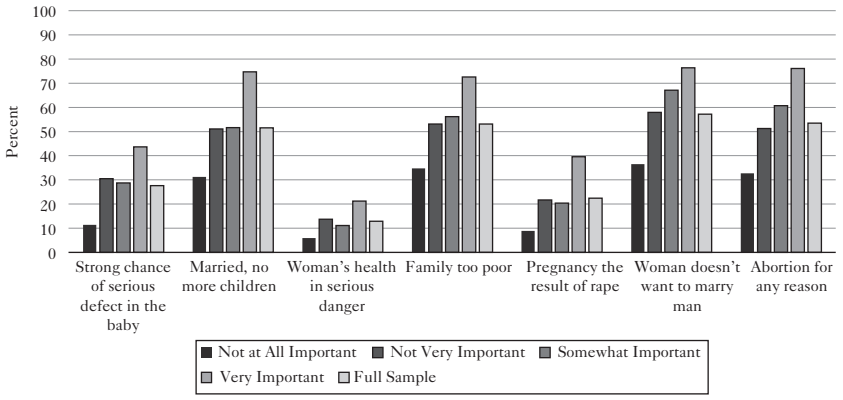

FIGURE 2.6.
Percent of Americans Who Oppose Abortion by How Important Americans Think Being a Christian Is to Being Truly American

been accounted for? Ultimately, we contend the connection is found in the identity itself and in Christian nationalism's commitment to male authority over women's bodies. The latter issue we will take up at length in chapter 4. But regarding the former, because "American Christian" identity has become synonymous with an unequivocal pro-life stance, Ambassadors and Accommodators of Christian nationalism, regardless of their religious commitment or political leanings, equate a "Christian society" with a world where abortion is no longer an option.

Knowing this helps explain the confluence of Trump's Christian nationalist rhetoric with promises about the Supreme Court. The Trump campaign released a list of potential Supreme Court nominees before the election. Exit polls showed that many more Trump voters than Clinton voters viewed Supreme Court appointments as the most important factor in their decision.[41]

After winning the election, Trump chose a name from that list, Neil Gorsuch, who later won Senate confirmation. Trump's usual evangelical supporters and Ambassadors of Christian nationalism were ecstatic. Dobson was quick to commend Trump for delivering on a critical campaign promise. Dobson also spoke directly to Gorsuch, asking him "to be unwavering in his commitment to the sanctity of human life." Tony Perkins wrote that Gorsuch's swearing in was almost as

significant as Trump's.[42] Then, in June 2018, Justice Anthony Kennedy announced his retirement, allowing Trump another chance to nominate a United States Supreme Court Justice. Brett Kavanaugh was later confirmed after a volatile hearing. Not long after, a number of states passed laws criminalizing abortions performed after six weeks, or what their supporters called "fetal heartbeat bills." Anti-abortion advocates hope the court battles over these laws will conclude with the Supreme Court reconsidering *Roe v. Wade*. Those who supported Trump were delighted that the Supreme Court, now with a conservative majority, might now be able to restore America's lost godliness, defending the pre-born and protecting religious liberty.

There's Power in the Blood . . . and in the Flag

In the days leading up to Independence Day, congregations all across the United States celebrate in a variety of ways. Some, like First Baptist Dallas, dedicate an entire Sunday service to honoring the military and the country's freedom. Others band together and produce a special service for their community to attend. The largest congregations plan fireworks, cookouts, and a carnival-style atmosphere to honor America's "birthday." Many others, though, only mention Independence Day in passing, if at all.

We attended a handful of these services. What we saw was generally what you would expect: red, white, and blue everywhere; flags; classic songs celebrating America; the interweaving of Christian and American iconography; and salutes to the military. For the people in certain kinds of congregations, not only is the "Christian nation" narrative unquestioned, but true Christians recognize the freedoms Americans have been granted through a combination of God's grace and the blood of its patriots. Though perhaps not as aggressively as Robert Jeffress, most pastors and other speakers at the God and Country celebrations repeatedly pointed out the sacred nature of giving one's life to defend the United States. Many drew direct comparisons between the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and the sacrifice of military women and men. For example, at one event, a retired Air Force chaplain prayed during the offering:

> We can do nothing but thank thee, God, for the nearly 4 million service members, both men and women, who paid the ultimate sacrifice with their bodies and their blood for our freedoms today. Some of those great American patriots were from our own congregation. Oh Father, we thank you, for they set the support of the freedoms we enjoy this hour. Father, we thank you for Jesus Christ who extends eternal freedom, complete freedom. For the sacred Scripture says, "If Christ shall set you free, you shall be free indeed."

Sociologist Philip Gorski explains that Christian nationalism is heavily connected to the idea of blood, both as a sign of ethno-national purity (thus the connection between Christian nationalism, racism, and xenophobia that we will explore in greater depth in the next chapter) but also in terms of bloody conquest and sacrifice in war.[43] Consequently, parallels like the one drawn in this prayer between Jesus's blood shed for believers and the blood of patriots shed for Americans' freedoms find tremendous resonance.

Surveys affirm this connection, showing that Ambassadors and Accommodators elevate the military and military service to sacred status. There is a powerful link between Christian nationalist beliefs and believing that God's people must fight wars for good (Table I.1) or that truly moral people must serve in the military (Table I.2). Data from the BRS also show that Ambassadors and Accommodators are more likely than Resisters or Rejecters to say the government spends too little on defense (see Figure 2.5).[44] Together these findings give us some indication why Ambassadors and Accommodators supported Trump in 2016 election and continue to support him. As Trump himself proclaimed, "There's nobody bigger or better at the military than I am."[45] Trump repeatedly states his intention to increase spending for the military and defense, and his speeches regularly declare support for veterans. While Trump's "America First" rhetoric led some to worry that a withdrawal from the world stage would lead to a shrinking defense budget, one year into his presidency America's military budget dramatically increased.[46]

But just as Christian nationalism holds sacrifice on behalf of the nation to be sacred, it also connects this divine militarism with the

sacred symbols and rituals of American civil religion. Americans' orientations toward Christian nationalism are among the strongest predictors of their propensity to demand that everyone show respect for America's traditions (see Figure 2.5).[47] For some Americans—especially post 9/11—pledging allegiance, standing for the national anthem, and saluting the flag each evoke respect and admiration for the military and those who "paid the ultimate price" for American freedom. Trump himself has claimed, "You have to stand proudly for the national anthem" and has suggested that disrespecting the American flag should cost people their jobs.[48] This is one reason why President Trump and his supporters expressed such outrage as various National Football League (NFL) players knelt in silent protest during the national anthem during the 2016 and 2017 seasons. While the players clearly stated that they were trying to raise awareness of inequalities in police violence toward African American men, Trump and others equated the players' kneeling with disrespect toward military veterans.[49]

Many Ambassadors we interviewed felt equally strongly about respecting the flag and the national anthem, equating failing to do so with dishonoring the military. A veteran and Ambassador named Todd explained, "I took personal offense there. I find that highly offensive. And that's a tough one, because I do think, you know, freedom of speech. But I tie the American flag to the military, and the military is the only reason that we have the freedoms we have. So, I'm personally offended." Likewise, Elena, an Ambassador from central Oklahoma, was particularly scathing:

> First of all, Colin Kaepernick is a doofus. If he was a good football player, somebody would've picked him up by now. Him kneeling because of the oppression people are feeling, well, that's just a cop out . . . He doesn't know what true oppression is. If he did, then with his money would do something to help the matter, instead of just kneeling for the flag. You stand at the flag and you kneel at the cross. You do not . . . that's just disrespectful to our veterans who have fought and died for your right to do that. Okay?

There is perhaps no better encapsulation of Christian nationalism than "You stand at the flag and you kneel at the cross."[50]

President Trump was no less scathing in his criticisms of kneeling NFL players. On separate occasions Trump called the players "sons of bitches" and suggested those kneeling "maybe shouldn't be in the country," clearly drawing the boundary of American identity around ritual displays of patriotism.[51] Yet, while Trump received widespread criticism for his vulgarity and attack on free speech, pastor Robert Jeffress—a member of Trump's evangelical advisory board—publicly defended his comments on national television. Like Elena, Jeffress questioned whether the NFL players truly had anything to complain about, explaining, "These players ought to be thanking God that they live in a country where they're not only free to earn millions of dollars every year, but they're also free from the worry of being shot in the head for taking the knee like they would be in North Korea." The irony of these comments is the well-documented fact that unarmed black men *do* stand a much greater chance of being shot by police, the very thing the players were trying to highlight to the broader public.[52] Jeffress later doubled-down on his comments, adding, "All of us should thank God every day we live in a country where we do not have to fear government persecution for expressing our beliefs."[53]

"Thoughts and Prayers," but Not Gun Control

"You came through for me and I am going to come through for you!" Donald Trump promised attendees at the 2017 National Rifle Association (NRA) annual convention. On the campaign trail the NRA "came through" for Trump to the tune of $30 million worth of contributions.[54] Part of Trump's appeal to the NRA and other gun rights advocates has been his Christian nationalist rhetoric. Following the February 2018 mass shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, that killed 17 students and teachers, scores of politicians responded with public statements that their "thoughts and prayers" were with the victims and their families. Yet when the Florida state House of Representatives had the opportunity to consider

gun control legislation one week after the Parkland school shooting, they declined.[55] (In the name of public health, however, they did pass a referendum declaring pornography harmful.) Instead, these Florida legislators overwhelmingly passed a bill that required "In God We Trust" to be posted across all Florida public schools in a prominent place. In interviews, the Democratic sponsor of the bill, Kim Daniels, acknowledged that Florida's gun laws should be addressed. However, she and other representatives believed that Florida schools "need light in them like never before" and that God "is the light." According to Daniels, in order to solve gun violence in schools and communities like Parkland, "the real thing that needs to be addressed are issues of the heart."[56]

Two weeks after the Parkland school shooting, state senators in Alabama passed a bill that allowed for the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools. While Republican Gerald Dial had been promoting this bill for years, Dial argued the bill now carried with it an added significance. "I believe that if you had the Ten Commandments posted in a prominent place in school, it has the possibility to prohibit some student from taking action to kill other students . . . If this bill stops one school shooting in Alabama, just one, then it's worth the time and effort we're putting into it," Dial said. These legislators were driven by the belief that only by raising the profile of Christianity in the public sphere could we begin to see a decrease in such despicable acts of violence. Beyond this bill, there were no plans to consider other gun control legislation.[57] Wayne LaPierre—the executive officer of the NRA—also made a spirited case against gun control. While speaking at a conservative political conference, LaPierre claimed that the Second Amendment of the Constitution was "not bestowed by man, but granted by God to all Americans as our American birthright." Thus efforts to restrict Americans' access to firearms was akin to opposing God's will for the United States.

Three months after Parkland there was another mass shooting, this time at a high school in Santa Fe, Texas. One Christian radio host explicitly asked whether "taking God out of schools" was leading to more school shootings. He pointed to the fact that in 1995 a judge

had ruled that a Santa Fe high school could not offer a prayer to the Christian God or Jesus in a graduation service. In his view, this directly contradicted the free exercise of religion as protected by the First Amendment. This commentator posited that the "ACLU and the liberal judges that support their misreading of American history have turned many of our public schools into godless wastelands." He wondered whether the Santa Fe school shooting was a consequence of the judge's decision back in 1995. "Thoughts and prayers" he wrote, "are not a trivial distraction, but in the long run a major part of the solution."[58]

These recent responses to school shootings connecting Christian nationalism with an unwillingness to consider stronger gun laws are reflected in national data.[59] In Figure 2.5 it is clear that Rejecters and Resisters are more likely to agree that the federal government should enact stricter gun control legislation, while Ambassadors and Accommodators are not, even after accounting for Americans' political and religious characteristics.[60]

Why is this the case? First, and most obviously, Christian nationalism sacralizes America's founding documents. As LaPierre's quote above suggests, Ambassadors and Accommodators are highly sensitive to any infringements on their God-given Second Amendment rights. Rafael Cruz, pastor and father of Senator Ted Cruz, explains, "Note that the Second Amendment calls keeping and bearing arms a right that 'shall not be infringed.' It assumes that *you already have that right*, because it is intrinsic in the 'unalienable' right to life with which we have been 'endowed by our Creator.' "[61] But just as important, as their enthusiastic support for "wars for good," military spending, and military service would suggest, Ambassadors and Accommodators feel that the solution to societal disorder is not to remove the possibility of violence (which is ultimately impossible because of sin in the world) but to control it with the righteous violence of free, law-abiding citizens. This view is reflected in the mantra, here repeated by Mike Huckabee, "[T]he best way to stop a bad person with a gun is to have a good person with a weapon that is equal or superior to the one that he's using."[62]

Related to this is the *formation* of "bad guys" and "good guys." Christian nationalism sees societal decadence and chaos (including

violence) as inevitable when Christian cultural values disappear from America's schools and Americans' hearts. Indeed, in some sense, these instances of gun violence confirm what Christian nationalists believe; they are further evidence of society's moral decay following the removal of prayer and Bible reading from public schools and God's commandments from America's court houses.[63] Consequently, the preferred solution to gun violence is to protect the gun rights of American citizens and encourage the reintroduction of Christian values into the public sphere—both possibilities they believe may be realized only by continuing Trump's presidency.

"White Christian America" and Support for Trumpolitics

Finally, the current state of our discourse regarding white Christians' support for Trump and his politics would benefit from greater precision. The high levels of support Trump enjoys among white Christians are due to the higher than average levels of Christian nationalism among white Christians. As Figure 2.7 shows, white Christians who are Resisters or Rejecters of Christian nationalism similarly resist and

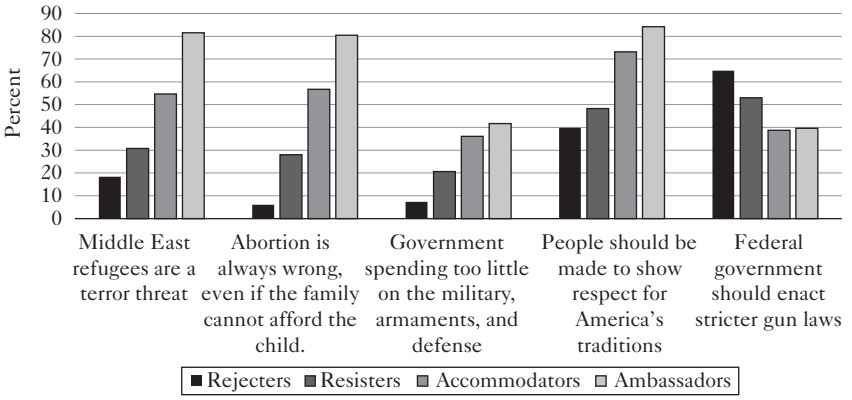

Figure 2.7.
White Christians' Views toward Trumpolitics across Christian Nationalism Orientations

Source: 2007 & 2017 Baylor Religion Surveys.

reject Trumpolitics. In other words, it's not "white Christians" who support Trump overwhelmingly, it's a particular subset of white Christians who embrace Christian nationalism.

When It Comes to Politics, Christian Nationalism and Religious Commitment Are Not the Same

There is a fascinating paradox at the heart of Christian nationalism—one that we will return to throughout the book. As we saw in the previous chapter (see Table 1.2), those Americans who most strongly espouse Christian nationalist beliefs also tend to be the most religious as measured by activities like church attendance, prayer, and Scripture reading. Christian nationalism and personal religiosity are strongly correlated, in other words. Yet it would be a mistake to conclude that these two characteristics, because they appear so related, influence Americans' political views in similar ways. In fact, the great paradox is that Christian nationalism and religiosity often influence Americans political views *in the exact opposite direction*.

To illustrate, let's return to three political issues that were powerfully associated with Christian nationalism (see Figures 2.3 and 2.5). As Americans show greater agreement with Christian nationalism, they are more likely to view Muslim refugees as terrorist threats, agree that citizens should be made to show respect for America's traditions, and oppose stricter gun control laws. But as Americans become more religious in terms of attendance, prayer, and Scripture reading, they move in the opposite direction on these issues (see Figure 2.8). These situations are not anomalous. In fact, the crisscrossing pattern we observe here holds true for other political issues.

Why is this important? Obviously it would be a mistake for sociologists or other observers to conclude that "religious commitment" necessarily inclines Americans to hold more conservative political positions. In fact, religious commitment often appears to do the opposite. This should be welcome news for those who fear religion is a barrier to promoting greater tolerance and ushering in what they

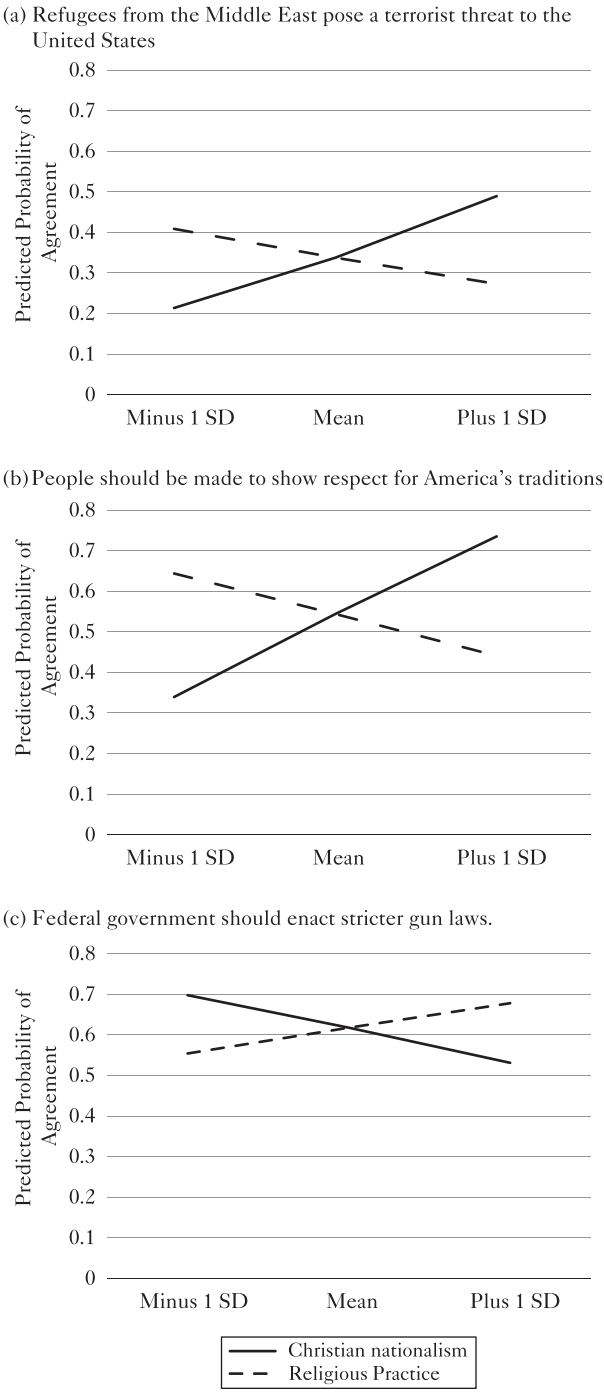

FIGURE 2.8.
Opposing Influences of Christian Nationalism and Religious Practice

believe to be more equitable, humane government policies. Rather, religiosity, and by extension devoutly religious persons, may desire similar outcomes—that is, once other factors like Christian nationalism are taken into account.

But more than this, we want to stress the uniqueness of Christian nationalism as a cultural framework, distinguishing it from "religion" per se. Put simply, Christian nationalism does not encourage high moral standards or value self-sacrifice, peace, mercy, love, justice, and so on. Nor does it necessarily encourage conforming one's political opinions to those that Jesus might have. In a 2018 interview with *The New York Times*, Jerry Falwell Jr. stated plainly, "I don't look to the teachings of Jesus for what my political beliefs should be."[64] Think back on the excerpts we shared from Robert Jeffress's Freedom Sunday sermon. There were no spiritual applications or exhortations to grow in Christian obedience. Rather, Christian nationalist appeals to "Christian foundations" and "Christian beliefs" were more like code words for a way of life that is "ours" (read: white conservative Christians) by divine right and which "the secularists, the humanists, the atheists, the infidels" want to take away.

This distinction helps us understand why Christian nationalist rhetoric reemerges every four years during presidential campaigns or during times of heightened cultural conflict. It helps us understand why Ambassadors of Christian nationalism vote for famously impious and immoral candidates while also consistently taking particular stances on social and political issues. Appeals to someone's religion, in this case Christianity, *may* involve a plea to live out transcendent Christian values of love, mercy, or justice. Appeals to Christian nationalism, by contrast, involve either a proprietary claim or a call to arms, always in response to a perceived threat. In short, Christian nationalism is all about power.

Conclusion

Twenty years ago, Christian Smith argued that conservative Christians' calls to "take America back for God" were *really* about religious renewal

and personal transformation rather than political power. We beg to differ. Though we certainly agree with Smith that many evangelicals and otherwise committed, conservative Christians are primarily concerned with living out their faith as individuals, Americans who most enthusiastically affirm Christian nationalist ideals seem to put political power above religion. As Rogers Brubaker explains in reference to Europe's own emergent strains of Christian nationalism,

> The Christianity invoked by the national populists . . . is not a substantive Christianity; it is a "secularized Christianity-as-culture" . . . a civilizational and identitarian "Christianism." It is a matter of belonging rather than believing, a way of defining "us" in relation to "them."[65]

This perfectly represents what we observe in American Christian nationalism. Christian nationalism mobilizes Americans to take positions on issues and rally behind candidates that will defend their cultural preferences, preserve their political influence, and maintain the "proper" social order.

We have also seen that while Christian nationalism is most prevalent among white Christians, and specifically white evangelicals, the two are not synonymous and conflating the two is unnecessarily misleading. Indeed, evangelical Rejecters and Resisters likely have more in common politically with unaffiliated Rejecters and Resisters than they do with other evangelicals. Likewise, the source of Christian nationalism's influence in the political realm is not "religious" in essence, since personal religiosity often tends to influence Americans to hold more progressive stances on political issues, once Christian nationalism is taken into account. Rather, Christian nationalism uses Christian language and symbols to demarcate and defend group boundaries and privileges. In the next chapter, we'll demonstrate how Christian nationalism characteristically extends the definitions of "us" and "them" beyond mere religious identities to include other markers of *true* American citizenship.