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**Christian Zionism and Nationalism  
in the Era of Trump**

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## JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF CHRISTIAN ZIONISM

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Front cover image: “Rubble of Fahkri Abu Diab’s home under Israeli flag” taken on March 10, 2025, by Deanna K. Roberts.

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Friends of Sabeel North America  
Institute for the Study of Christian Zionism  
PO Box 3192  
Greenwood Village, CO 80155  
[www.studychristianzionism.org](http://www.studychristianzionism.org)

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Image credit: “Apartheid Street”, taken in Hebron, Palestine on January 27, 2014 by Deanna K. Roberts

## FROM THE EDITOR

Our second issue focuses particularly on Christian Zionism as it relates to the authoritarianism currently wielded by the second US Trump administration. The authors – Halah Ahmad, Ben Lorber, and Robert O. Smith – examine how Christian Zionism shores up American tyranny both at home and abroad, bolstering the repression of activism around Palestine in the United States and partnering with Christian nationalism as well as fueling Israel’s genocide in Gaza.

Smith looks at three cases that demonstrate the real-world effects of Christian Zionist commitments and political activities: 1) Judge Julia Sebutinde’s jurisprudence for the International Court of Justice; 2) the Heritage Foundation’s Project Esther; and 3) the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation. Ahmad examines how Christian Zionist groups and individuals have for decades aimed to suppress democracy and gain electoral power in the United States, bringing us to the present authoritarian moment. Lorber does a deep dive into one such group actualizing the Christian Zionist policy agenda: the New Apostolic Reformation and its leader, Florida-based Mario Bramnick. Lorber argues that Bramnick’s increasing influence in the realm of Christian Zionism “illustrates the dominionist, messianic agenda, and increasingly transnational and multiethnic character of [the ideology], a bedrock of today’s authoritarian and Christian nationalist upsurge.”

Works written by Kathleen Christison (*Justice on the Cross: Palestinian Liberation Theology, the Struggle Against Israeli Oppression, and the Church*) and edited by Susan Landau (*‘Thou Shalt Not Stand Idly By’: Jews of Conscience on Palestine*), reviewed by Dr. Michael Spath and Dr. Mark Braverman, respectively, then provide a welcome template for how to engage critically and ethically as Christians and Jews in the face of Christian Zionism.

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Forthcoming journal issues will consider Christian Zionism in Latin America and indigenous Palestinian responses to Christian Zionism. Please also check out our new podcast, *Bad Theology: Busted*, co-hosted by ISCZ team members Dee Roberts and Jesse Wheeler which features such figures as founders of the Institute, Rev. Dr. Stephen Sizer and Rev. Dr. Don Wagner, as well as academics, analysts, theologians, and activists from Latin America, South Africa, and beyond.

We hope you'll consider supporting our work. To make a donation, please go to: <https://studychristianzionism.org/donate/>.

In solidarity,  
Mimi Kirk  
Washington, DC  
January 2026

# Gaza and the Christian Zionist Present

by Robert O. Smith

## UNCOVERING THE PAST

When I began focusing on Christian Zionism in the early 2000s, my aim was to bring some level of academic structure to explorations of the topic. Working alongside several scholars, especially Swedish theologian Göran Gunner, efforts toward that goal were successful: since then, several academically impressive theses, dissertations, and books focused on Christian Zionism as a central theme have been produced.<sup>1</sup> Despite this academic success, several specialists on the so-called “Israeli-Palestinian conflict” have suggested that comprehending Christian Zionism contributes little to understanding the dynamics of that specific settler-colonial invasion.<sup>2</sup>

Since the Hamas-led military action against Israeli soldiers and civilians on October 7, 2023, interest in understanding why governments in the North Atlantic alliance allowed themselves to be complicit in the excesses of Israel’s response has rekindled interest in Christian Zionism. In this article, I intend to share a short history of my two decades of

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1. Among theses, see Brooke E. Baker, “Disrupting Dichotomy: Shifting Representations of Muslims and Jews in Twenty-First Century Christian Zionist Discourse,” MA thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 2023. For dissertations, see Matthew C. Westbrook, “The International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem and Renewalist Zionism: Emerging Jewish-Christian Ethnonationalism,” PhD dissertation, Drew University, 2014; and Crystal Silva-McCormick, “Latine Christian Zionism: Examining the Matrices of Latine Identity, Politics, and Religiosity,” PhD dissertation, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 2024.

2. See, for instance, The Thinking Muslim, “Gaza: Cruel Zionism, Past and Present with Professor Avi Shlaim,” YouTube (January 16, 2024), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNg93bLJL18&t=3s>. In addition to Shlaim, other minimizations of Christian Zionist influence in studies of the “Israel lobby” can be found. See, for instance, John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), and Ilan Pappé, *Lobbying for Zionism on Both Sides of the Atlantic* (Oneworld, 2024). Both books offer insights but, in my assessment, could have been strengthened with greater attention to Christian Zionist contributions.



Image credit: iStock

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involvement in the academic study of Christian Zionism and then move to how recent developments in relation to Palestine/Israel have set a new tone for ongoing investigations.

During the first decade of the present millennium, writers focused on Christian Zionism mostly approached the topic from what I considered either promotional or polemical perspectives. My goal, on the other hand, was to standardize discourse around Christian Zionism as a theopolitical phenomenon deserving of analysis and understanding. The first step in that process, to my mind, was to develop and suggest a suitably flexible working definition of what Christian Zionism is or at least might be. My first effort to produce such a definition provides a pristine example of what many historians decry as presentism: as late as 2009 I published an article suggesting that “Christian Zionism is a politically mobilized strand of Christian fundamentalism.”<sup>3</sup> At the time, I agreed with several other authors’ assumptions that the roots of Christian Zionism could be explained by the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century trends inaugurated by John Nelson Darby’s premillennial dispensationalism or, less precisely, Christian fundamentalism.<sup>4</sup> That these movements grew up alongside Jewish political Zionism seemed to provide a sufficient genealogy. Even when writers of that period (myself included) recognized a longer historical trajectory for Christian Zionism’s development, we allowed contemporary forms of popular Christianity to shape our understanding of the phenomenon.

After being challenged by a persistent dissertation advisor—Barry Hankins at Baylor, an honest-to-goodness historian—to push harder into primary sources, the world of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Anglo-American thought opened in new directions.<sup>5</sup> That thicker historical trajectory resulted in a new definition: “Christian Zionism [is] political action, informed by specifically Christian commitments, to promote or preserve Jewish control

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3. Robert O. Smith, “Toward a Lutheran Response to Christian Zionism,” *dialog: A Journal of Theology* 48, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 280. On presentism, see, for instance, Lynn Hunt, “Against Presentism,” *Journal of the American Historical Association* 40, no. 5 (May 2002), <https://www.historians.org/perspectives-article/against-presentism-may-2002/>.

4. I’m thinking here especially of studies I was reading at the time, including Donald E. Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon: A Call to Partnership for Middle Eastern and Western Christians* (Herald, 1995), and Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Roadmap to Armageddon?* (IVP Academic, 2004).

5. Hankins is an historian of Southern Baptist thought among other forms of Fundamentalism, properly understood. Of his works, see especially *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservatives and American Culture* (University of Alabama Press, 2002), and *Jesus and Gin: Evangelicalism, the Roaring Twenties and Today’s Culture Wars* (St. Martin’s Press, 2010).

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over the geographic area now comprising Israel and Palestine.”<sup>6</sup> This definition lifted limits both on the historical period being considered and the nature of Christian doctrine considered relevant to Christian Zionism. Since, as so many researchers have shown in the last decade, Christian Zionism cannot be associated with any one national context or combination of Christian beliefs, it is best understood as a political phenomenon bolstered, promoted, and sometimes masked and mystified by theological claims.

My revised definition has taken a beating over the past decade. Several young scholars participating in the American Academy of Religion seminar I co-chaired with Göran Gunner bucked against it.<sup>7</sup> More recently, as Palestinian Christian scholars have addressed Christian Zionism in earnest, the definition, in its elasticity, doesn’t always address their contextual needs with precision. In a paper published on the Kairos Palestine website, for instance, Munther Isaac cites my definition and then quickly moves on to specify that Christian Zionism is an “imperial theology” in which justice is “relativized” and Palestinians are “dehumanized.”<sup>8</sup> Mitri Raheb, noting my emphasis on the Anglo-American tradition of Judeo-centric prophecy interpretation as one foundation for the movement, argues that “Christian Zionism should be defined as a Christian lobby that supports the Jewish settler colonialism of Palestinian land by using biblical/theological constructs within a metanarrative while taking glocal considerations into account.”<sup>9</sup>

In addition to new definitions of Christian Zionism, Palestinian scholars have helpfully highlighted how “liberal” expressions of the movement can be just as harmful for their national interests, safety, and wellbeing as more “conservative” forms.<sup>10</sup> I suggest that the “specific Christian commitments” of my definition is sufficiently vague to include thinkers as

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6. Robert O. Smith, *More Desired Than Our Own Salvation: The Roots of Christian Zionism* (Oxford, 2013), 4; cf. 206, 208.

7. See especially Sean Durbin, “Walking in the Mantle of Esther: ‘Political’ Action as ‘Religious’ Practice,” and Timo R. Stewart, “Israelis, Israelites, and God’s Hand in History: Finnish Christian Attitudes toward the Creation of the State of Israel,” both in *Comprehending Christian Zionism: Perspectives in Comparison*, ed. Göran Gunner and Robert O. Smith (Fortress, 2014).

8. Munther Isaac, “Christian Zionism through Palestinian Eyes,” *Kairos Palestine*, <https://www.kairospalestine.ps/index.php/resources/around-the-web/christian-zionism-through-palestinian-eyes>.

9. Mitri Raheb, *Decolonizing Palestine: The Land, the People, the Bible* (Orbis, 2023), chapter 2.

10. I write this conscious of the potentially confusing limitations of these Anglo-American political categories.

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theologically and politically divergent as John Hagee and Reinhold Niebuhr. In both cases, however, Palestinians would point out that wherever Christian Zionist thinkers fall on doctrinal or political spectrums, their respective political action to “promote or preserve Jewish control over” historic Palestine harms them just the same. As feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether pointed out, “[T]he more pervasive but unnamed forms of Christian Zionism found in mainline churches...are deeply entwined with Western Christian imperialism toward the Middle East, represented by the British Empire and now by American empire.”<sup>11</sup>

The pervasive, trans-partisan reality of Christian Zionism’s cultural contribution has been confirmed by the phase of the struggle over Gaza which commenced in October 2023. In the United States, for instance, the conflict erupted under the US presidency of Joseph Biden and continued through the electoral contest between presidential candidates Kamala Harris and Donald Trump. Hardly anyone was surprised to learn that Mike Huckabee, a Baptist minister selected by President-elect Trump to serve as US Ambassador to Israel once said, “There is no such thing as a West Bank. It’s Judea and Samaria. There’s no such thing as a settlement. They’re communities. They’re neighborhoods. They’re cities.”<sup>12</sup> If one is convinced that Christian Zionism is a rightwing phenomenon alone, they would have been surprised when former president Bill Clinton, campaigning for Kamala Harris, said of the October 7 attacks, “I think part of it is that Hamas did not care about a homeland for the Palestinians. They wanted to kill Israelis and make Israel uninhabitable.” His critique of the political motivations was supplemented with anti-Islamic Christian Zionist rationale: “Well I got news for them [Hamas; Muslims]. They were there first. Before...their faith [Islam] existed, they [Jews] were there in the time of King David and the southernmost tribes had Judea and Samaria.”<sup>13</sup>

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11. Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Christian Zionism and Mainline Western Christian Churches,” in *Comprehending Christian Zionism*, Gunner and Smith, eds., 179.

12. Michele Kelemen, “Palestinians are Nervous as Mike Huckabee is Named Ambassador to Israel,” *NPR: All Things Considered*, November 14, 2024.

13. Olivia Land, “Bill Clinton Calls Out ‘Young Arab Americans’ and Defends Israel at Appearance in Swing State Michigan,” *New York Post*, October 31, 2024, <https://nypost.com/2024/10/31/us-news/former-president-bill-clinton-gave-an-impassioned-defense-of-israels-war-in-gaza-what-would-you-do/>. Clinton was speaking at Christ Temple Apostolic Faith Church in Muskegon Heights, Michigan, on Wednesday, October 30, 2024. Clinton revealed the basis of his simplistic, uncritical Christian Zionism during a 1994 speech before the Israeli Knesset. Clinton’s pastor, with whom he had formed a bond during a “religious mission” in “Israel,” later told him, “If you abandon Israel, God will never forgive you.” The pastor further said, “It is God’s will that Israel, the biblical home of the people of Israel, continue forever and ever.” See “Remarks by President Clinton to the Israeli Knesset,” October 27, 1994, <https://clintonwhitehouse6.archives.gov/1994/10/1994-10-27-president-clinton-to-the-israeli-knesset.html>.

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Awareness that Christian Zionist commitments were present throughout the North Atlantic political spectrum informed planning for the first International Consultation on Christian Zionism held in January 2025. Hosted at the Baptismal Site of Jesus by the HRH Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the consultation signaled a new level of international, interreligious, and diplomatic interest in the topic. The planning team consisted of Dr. Wasfi Kailani, Dr. Tarek Elgawhary, Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, Bishop Dr. Munib Younan, and myself. This small group, in constant contact with Prince Ghazi through Kailani and Elgawhary, included two Muslims and three Christians; looked at another way, it included four Arabs and one person from the United States. Most importantly, it included, in Kailani, an archaeologist who is a governmental official advising the Hashemite Royal Court.

The consultation marked a watershed moment in the history of the study of Christian Zionism:

- First, the gathering's title—"International Consultation on Understanding Christian Zionism and its Effects on Christians in the Middle East"—marks it as a moment when Palestinian Christians took the matter of Christian Zionism firmly in hand.<sup>14</sup> This focus on Palestinian Christians, echoed by official Jordanian investment in the wellbeing of the community and its custodianship of Christian and Muslim holy places in Jerusalem, was emphasized when the consultation's opening was addressed by H.B. Patriarch Theophilos III.
- Second, the consultation marked a moment when Arabs generally, including Muslims, began to address Christian Zionism as a component of ongoing western imperialism. As such, Christian Zionism, so often discussed as either a matter of Jewish-Christian relations or intra-Christian debate, reached a new level of concern within Muslim-Christian dialogue.

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14. For this emphasis, see Daoud Kuttub, "Jordan Hosts Landmark Conference on Christian Zionism's Impact on Middle Eastern Christians," *Word & Way*, January 30, 2025, <https://wordandway.org/2025/01/30/jordan-hosts-landmark-conference-on-christian-zionisms-impact-on-middle-eastern-christians/>.

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- Thirdly, the consultation, hosted by governmental officials, indicates that Christian Zionism must now be considered a matter of diplomatic and international security concern. This is especially important when various expressions of Christian Zionism are identified as a form of religious extremism.<sup>15</sup> Each of these three emphases of the January 2025 consultation charts new paths for the study of Christian Zionism within both academic and policy-oriented circles.
- Finally, by adopting an explicitly decolonial approach, the consultation sought to challenge many established methods of comprehending Christian Zionism, highlighting, as the event’s press release stated, “how Christian Zionism provides the ideological framework, that is the software, facilitating the settler colonization of Palestinian land, while Western military support provide the hardware, enabling ethnic cleansing and genocide.”<sup>16</sup>

### THE CHRISTIAN ZIONIST PRESENT

The historian’s desire to avoid presentism does not mean we avoid commenting on the present. Indeed, the nature of the International Consultation on Christian Zionism awakened in several of the scholars and theologians in attendance the necessity of tying lofty reflections to the contemporary realities of material conditions. Although discussions of Christian Zionism are found across such fields as Anthropology, Sociology, History, and Political Science as well as in several theological sub-disciplines including intellectual history, scriptural hermeneutics, and interreligious relations and ethics, Israel’s ongoing genocide in Gaza has sparked new forms of political action and, with them, notable

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15. Christian Zionism has not often been included in studies of religious extremism. Extremism, like terrorism, can be a subjective category most often applied to designated theopolitical others. See, however, Robert O. Smith, “Christian Zionism, American Modernity, and the Trump Declaration on Jerusalem,” *Contending Modernities*, January 8, 2018, <https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/global-currents/christian-zionism-american-modernity-trump-declaration-jerusalem/>; and Asa Winstanley, “Religious Extremism is at the Heart of US Support for Israel,” *Electronic Intifada*, June 6, 2018, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/asa-winstanley/religious-extremism-heart-us-support-israel>.

16. Tarek Elgawhary, Wasfi Kailani, Mitri Raheb, Robert O. Smith, and Munib Younan, “Press Release: International Consultation on Understanding Christian Zionism and its Effects on Christians in the Middle East,” January 25, 2025, <https://www.daralkalima.edu.ps/uploads/files/Press%20Release%20of%20International%20Consultation%20on%20Christian%20Zionism%2025-1-2025.pdf>.

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expressions of Christian Zionism that indicate fruitful trajectories for further explorations of the theopolitical phenomenon.<sup>17</sup>

I will discuss three cases, each related to the present situation in Gaza: 1) Judge Julia Sebutinde’s jurisprudence for the International Court of Justice; 2) the Heritage Foundation’s Project Esther; and 3) the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation. As individual cases, but even more so in their interconnections, these cases demonstrate that academic discussions of Christian Zionism must take account of the trajectory inaugurated by the January 2025 International Consultation on Christian Zionism with the purpose of addressing the real-world effects of Christian Zionist commitments and political activities.

### *The International Court of Justice*

In 2012, Julia Sebutinde, a jurist from Uganda, became the first African woman elected to serve on the International Court of Justice (ICJ). She was reelected to the court in 2020 and then elected vice president of the 17-judge panel in February 2024. The previous month, in January 2024, the ICJ had issued six “provisional measures” ensuring Israel did not engage in activities that could constitute genocide. Of those six, Judge Aharon Barak, from Israel, supported two. Judge Sebutinde, issuing a detailed dissenting opinion, rejected all six provisional measures.<sup>18</sup>

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17. My use of the term “genocide” is meant to be accurately descriptive rather than polemical. My usage is informed by two sources. First, the International Court of Justice, in “Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip” (South Africa v. Israel), Provisional Measures, Order of January 26, 2024, ICJ Reports 2024, found that, in the plausible applicability of the “genocide convention” on Israel’s actions in Gaza, “In the Court’s view, the facts and circumstances mentioned above are sufficient to conclude that at least some of the rights claimed by South Africa and for which it is seeking protection are plausible” (§54, p. 23). Second, in September 2025, the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory found, according to its chair, “that Israel is responsible for the commission of genocide in Gaza.” See “Israel has Committed Genocide in the Gaza Strip, UN Commission Finds,” United Nations Press Release, September 16, 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/09/israel-has-committed-genocide-gaza-strip-un-commission-finds>. An official, binding finding that the State of Israel has committed genocide will need to be issued by the ICJ. See, however, Julian Borger, “‘Really Cautious’: Why the ICJ is Delaying a Gaza Genocide Verdict,” *The Guardian*, July 27, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2025/jul/27/why-the-icj-is-delaying-a-gaza-genocide-verdict>.

18. For the broader context, see Areesha Lodhi, “What has the ICJ Ordered Israel to Do on Gaza War, and What’s Next?” *Al Jazeera*, January 26, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/26/what-has-the-icj-ordered-israel-to-do-on-gaza-war-and-whats-next>.

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Judge Sebutinde’s blanket support for Israel’s official positions was surprising to many. Adonia Ayebare, then Uganda’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations, tweeted that her opinion “does not represent the Government of Uganda’s position on the situation in Palestine.”<sup>19</sup> When Nawaf Salam resigned from the ICJ in January 2025 to become the prime minister of Lebanon, Judge Sebutinde became president of the ICJ. The shift brought new attention to her January 2024 dissent in South Africa’s genocide case against Israel. The dissent, which seeks to establish Jews as “indigenous” to the region, includes a great deal of biblical history; while the “Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)” is “religious in nature,” she suggests, “many scholars consider [its texts] valuable historical documents.”<sup>20</sup> Independent researcher Zachary Foster suggested in a post on X that Sebutinde had plagiarized significant portions of her opinion from an article published by the Hudson Institute, an historically non-partisan think tank that in recent history has associated itself with several members of the first Trump administration.<sup>21</sup>

Although the content of Sebutinde’s dissent from the ICJ majority opinion hewed closely to Israeli propaganda regarding the state’s national origins and intentions, journalist Max Blumenthal observed that her writing did not seem to be motivated by “manipulation or enticement.” Instead, Blumenthal suggested, her views “were much more likely a reflection of the Christian Zionist belief system she developed as a member of Watoto, a Pentecostal megachurch in the Ugandan capital of Kampala. It was there that Sebutinde says she developed her worldview under the tutelage of a Canadian pastor and End Times aficionado named Gary Skinner.”<sup>22</sup>

In August 2025, Sebutinde confirmed that her opinion in the ICJ case against the State of Israel was driven primarily by Christian Zionist commitments. During a speech at Watoto Church, she said, “[T]he Lord is counting on me to stand on the side of Israel.”

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19. Adonia Ayebare, X post, January 26, 2024, <https://x.com/adoniaayebare/status/1750895305753850001>.

20. Julia Sebutinde, “Dissenting Opinion of Vice-President Sebutinde,” International Court of Justice, July 19, 2024, <https://icj-cij.org/node/204162>.

21. Zachary Foster, X post, January 26, 2025, <https://x.com/ZachFoster/status/1883555090465804702>.

22. Max Blumenthal, “End Timer ICJ Vice President Plagiarized in the name of Christian Zionism,” *The Grayzone*, January 24, 2025, <https://thegrayzone.com/2025/01/24/icj-president-christian-zionist-end-times/>

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Sebutinde went on to share her “very strong conviction that we are in the End Times. The signs are being shown in the Middle East. I want to be on the right side of history. I am convinced that time is running out.”<sup>23</sup> These comments provide a case study for how apocalyptic Christian Zionism can translate religious convictions into political action (in this case, Sebutinde’s novel approach to jurisprudence). On a broader scale, the case of Judge Sebutinde’s Christian Zionism demonstrates important aspects of the growth of evangelical political influence throughout the Global South. Gary Skinner and his Watoto church were directly involved, for instance, in the broad political agenda—fueled by many preachers and political consultants from Europe and North America—that radicalized Ugandan society around the question of homosexuality.

Zambian Anglican priest Kapya Kaoma has noted how these preachers “take advantage of a colonial residue or internalized colonialism” that make it “easy to propagate their ideologies and attract big audiences. They find it easy to meet politicians and present their cases to political leaders.”<sup>24</sup> Kaoma would go on to publish a major study of how US-based evangelical leaders, including Rick Warren and Franklin Graham, collaborated with entities such as the Institute for Religion & Democracy (a DC-based, anti-liberationist, neoconservative think tank) to promote not just anti-homosexuality legislation in Uganda but to bolster conservative African opposition to liberalizing trends in churches throughout the Global North. In this way, Kaoma argues, conservative Christian and political leaders, primarily from North America, instrumentalized African Christians as pawns in their own culture wars.<sup>25</sup>

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23. Anthony Wasaka, “My Country Disowned Me after Israel–Gaza Ruling–Sabutinde,” *Monitor* (Uganda), August 13, 2025, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/my-country-disowned-me-after-israel-gaza-ruling-sebutinde-5153060>.

24. Amy Fallon, “US Preachers Lit Homophobia Fuse,” *Mail & Guardian*, March 6, 2014, <https://mg.co.za/article/2014-03-06-us-preachers-lit-homophobia-fuse/>.

25. Kapya Kaoma, *Globalizing the Culture Wars: US Conservatives, African Churches and Homophobia* (Political Research Associates, 2009). See also Duncan Osborne, “US Right-Wing Charities Silent on Uganda Bill,” *Gay City News*, December 21, 2009, <https://gaycitynews.com/us-right-wing-charities-silent-on-uganda-bill/>. The results of this ideological process have now found their way, through global governance, to the International Court of Justice. This lone judge’s opinion, on its own, does not carry much power and weight. But when that lone dissenter becomes president of the Court, their bureaucratic power becomes far more than a curiosity as it translates into further delays. Justice delayed is justice denied. In this case, prevarications and delays allow the crime in question to continue as the very powers promoted by libertarian political economies realize their fullest purpose of ensuring wealth and freedom for the few on the backs of the many.

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Awareness of these broader, heavily funded theopolitical agendas calls attention to similar efforts throughout the developing world by the Atlas Group, a global network rooted in Antony Fisher's UK-based Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA), a key vehicle for promoting neoliberal economic theories and cultural politics. In the United States, the IEA works closely with the Manhattan Institute (founded by Fisher in 1978 alongside William J. Casey, who went on to direct the US CIA) inside a broad network of rightwing institutions. Throughout Latin America, the Atlas Group has worked to promote evangelical Christianity as an anti-liberationist moral vehicle for neoliberal economics. The political success of Atlas Group-supported candidates such as Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil closely mirrors the growth of Christian Zionism and these same political movements' support for the State of Israel, both as an economically enviable "startup nation" and as a prophetically praised "chosen nation."<sup>26</sup>

Given the interweaving of (residual?) coloniality and direct corporate investment in certain forms of Christianity to promote specific economic and political interests, scholars of Christian Zionism might consider expanding analysis to consider how some manifestations of the phenomenon may not originate with spontaneous popular religiosity. Instead, Christian Zionism, forthrightly understood as political action, may result from carefully curated efforts to cultivate and promote religious practices and doctrinal systems for explicitly political purposes. In other words, it is imperative for Christian Zionism to not be approached by the humanities (including the fields of theology and religious studies) alone. With respect to Kaoma's insight regarding a global ideological flow, some expressions of Christian Zionism may, in fact, result from an ideological campaign conducted on behalf of Global North elites in contexts of economic development intended not only to win hearts and minds in those target contexts but to exert pressure back onto the Global North. Christian Zionism, no less than debates about homosexuality, may be the result of colonial instrumentalization with an eye toward culture wars in the Global North.

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26. On the Latin American influence of the Atlas Group, see Lee Fang, "Sphere of Influence: How American Libertarians are Remaking Latin American Politics," *The Intercept*, August 9, 2017, <https://theintercept.com/2017/08/09/atlas-network-alejandro-chafuen-libertarian-think-tank-latin-america-brazil/>.

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### *Project Esther*

The second Trump administration, inaugurated in January 2025, quickly got to work extending the political agenda of longstanding culture wars in the United States. The agenda was provided by Project 2025, the latest iteration of the Heritage Foundation's Mandate for Leadership series, reflecting the *longue durée* of New Right efforts to assert dominance over US society. The agenda required the dismantling of both "critical race theory" and "diversity, equity, and inclusion" priorities throughout all levels of government and education; those efforts provided cover for the explicit legal goal of rolling back domestic civil rights legislation, including the implementing structures of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Subsequent developments in 2025 to limit US citizens' First Amendment rights to free individual speech and the freedom of the press were soon to follow.<sup>27</sup>

The Trump administration's gutting of domestic civil liberties has been facilitated by its focus on combatting antisemitism to assure Jewish comfort and safety at US colleges and universities. After October 7, 2023, the administration enacted funding threats against major universities, including Harvard, based on perceptions of antisemitic bias. The strategy, based on the redefinition of the working and legal definitions of antisemitism offered by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA),<sup>28</sup> has been implemented through Project Esther, a pro-Israel program initiated by the Heritage Foundation.

In November 2023, the Heritage Foundation launched a new "National Task Force to Combat Antisemitism." True to the broadly ecumenical vision of founder Paul Weyrich, the task force included a national Jewish organization, the Coalition for Jewish Values.<sup>29</sup>

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27. Associated with the Annales School of historiography, the concept of *longue durée* was repurposed to excellent effect by Mitri Raheb in *Faith in the Face of Empire: The Bible through Palestinian Eyes* (Orbis, 2014).

28. Vimal Patel, "How to Define 'Antisemitism' Is a Subject of Bitter Debate," *New York Times*, May 8, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/08/us/antisemitism-definition-debate.html>. On the IHRA definition, see Munib A. Younan and Robert O. Smith, "Antisemitism and the Question of Palestine," in *Interreligious Solidarity for Justice in Palestine-Israel: Ecumenical Response to International Law Violations*, ed. Ulrich Duchrow and Mark Braverman (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025).

29. The group is not considered representative of mainstream US Jewish commitments. See Nathan Guttman, "Inspired By Trump Era, Orthodox Rabbis Launch New Political Group," *The Forward*, November 10, 2017, <https://forward.com/news/386842/inspired-by-trump-era-orthodox-rabbis-launch-new-political-group/>.

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The other task force members read like a who's who of the long-established Christian Right, including Concerned Women of America (founded in 1978 by Beverly LaHaye) and the Family Research Council (founded in 1981 by James Dobson). Spurred to action by “the savage attack by Hamas against Israel” and “an increasing number of acts of hatred against Jews,” the group adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism along with the appended examples.<sup>30</sup>

In October 2024, the group launched Project Esther, the Heritage Foundation's plan to “rapidly dismantle the pro-Palestinian movement in the United States, along with its support at schools and universities, at progressive organizations and in Congress.” The original plan, focused on protests against how Israel was conducting itself in Gaza, sought to battle “antisemitism” by, according to the New York Times, “branding a broad range of critics of Israel as ‘effectively a terrorist support network,’ so that they could be deported, defunded, sued, fired, expelled, ostracized and otherwise excluded from what it considered ‘open society.’” The group's goals, unthinkable before the Trump administration, included removing “[c]urriculum it believed to be sympathetic to a ‘Hamas support’ narrative” along with the removal of “supporting faculty.” Additionally, “Social media would be purged of content deemed to be antisemitic. Institutions would lose public funding. Foreign students who pushed for Palestinian rights would have their visas revoked, or be deported.”<sup>31</sup>

Just as the Trump administration jumped to implement the paint-by-numbers government overhaul demanded by Project 2025, Project Esther's goals were quickly implemented. Palestinian Columbia University graduate student Mahmoud Khalil was arrested in university housing. At Tufts, Turkish graduate student Rümeyşa Öztürk was detained for an op-ed she wrote in her school's student newspaper.

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30. Heritage Foundation, “Heritage Announces Formation of National Task Force to Combat Antisemitism,” November 22, 2023, <https://www.heritage.org/press/heritage-announces-formation-national-task-force-combat-antisemitism>.

31. Katie J.M. Baker, “The Group Behind Project 2025 Has a Plan to Crush the Pro-Palestinian Movement,” *New York Times*, May 18, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/18/us/project-esther-heritage-foundation-palestine.html>.

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The Department of Homeland Security publicly accused Columbia graduate student Ranjani Srinivasan of being a terrorist sympathizer, revoking her visa.<sup>32</sup> Alarmed by this rise in the governmental weaponization of antisemitism against free speech on political matters, a group of ten Jewish organizations issued a statement in April 2025. While acknowledging the rise in assaults on Jews since the October 7, 2023, attack, the statement also observed that “[i]n recent weeks, escalating federal actions have used the guise of fighting antisemitism to justify stripping students of due process rights when they face arrest and/or deportation, as well as to threaten billions in academic research and education funding.”<sup>33</sup>

To understand Project Esther’s full significance, the program must be interpreted within the historical trajectories of both the Heritage Foundation and Anglo-American Christian Zionism itself.<sup>34</sup> In 1971, Lewis F. Powell, soon to be a US Supreme Court Justice, had drafted a memorandum, “Attack on American Free Enterprise System,” urging corporate participation in US politics. Soon afterward, Paul Weyrich and Edwin J. Feulner convinced Colorado-based beer producer Joseph Coors to follow Powell’s lead, establishing the Heritage Foundation in 1973. Weyrich (1942–2008) was raised in Racine, Wisconsin, and was heavily influenced by the conservatism of his German immigrant father, Ignatius, and their US senator, Joseph R. McCarthy. As a young leader, Weyrich sought to move the Republican Party “away from the limousine/country club set and getting down to the level of working people who were true conservatives.” He was convinced that “conservative Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox Jews, and Mormons had the same [political] beliefs.”<sup>35</sup>

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32. Leila Fadel, Taylor Haney, Arezou Rezvani, and Kyle Gallego-Mackie, “‘Citizenship Won’t Save You’: Free Speech Advocates Say Student Arrests Should Worry All,” *National Public Radio*, April 8, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/04/08/nx-s1-5349472/students-protest-trump-free-speech-arrests-deportation-gaza>.

33. Jewish Council for Public Affairs, “Broad Coalition of Mainstream Jewish Organizations Release Statement Rejecting False Choice between Jewish Safety & Democracy,” April 15, 2025, <https://jewishpublicaffairs.org/press-release/jewishcommunalstatement/>.

34. The Heritage Foundation is itself part of a broader network of rightwing think tanks, many of which were founded or organized by Paul Weyrich. On the broader history, see, for instance, Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America*, second ed. (Penguin, 2023), and Katherine Stewart, *Money, Lies, and God: Inside the Movement to Destroy American Democracy* (Bloomsbury, 2025). For a foundational study, see Jean Stefancic and Richard Delgado, *No Mercy: How Conservative Think Tanks and Foundations Changed America's Social Agenda* (Temple University Press, 1996).

35. Perry Deane Young, *God's Bullies: Power, Politics, and Religious Tyranny* (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1982), 125-126.

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This broadly ecumenical vision – informed by cultural traditionalism and neoliberal economics<sup>36</sup> —provided the foundation for what would become known as the New Right.

Although the New Right movement Weyrich envisioned and equipped with a variety of institutional tools is on the right wing of US politics, it is a mistake to understand Weyrich as conservative in a literal sense. As he said to a journalist in early 1978, “We are different from previous generations of conservatives. We are no longer working to preserve the status quo. We are radicals, working to overturn the present power structure of this country.”<sup>37</sup> The next year, Weyrich would partner with Jerry Falwell and others to create the Moral Majority. In addition to delivering millions of Christian fundamentalist voters to the polls, the alliance with Falwell introduced pro-segregationist and evangelical (often dispensationalist) Christian Zionist strands into the New Right.<sup>38</sup> Thus expanded, the broadly ecumenical movement fostered by Paul Weyrich succeeded in bringing Ronald Reagan to the White House.

Dissatisfied with shaping the Republican Party alone, Weyrich set his sights on transforming US society. In 1999, he blamed the “cultural collapse” of the United States on “[t]he ideology of...Cultural Marxism.”<sup>39</sup>

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36. Neoliberal economic theories are most often associated with Friedrich von Hayek and other members of his Mont Pèlerin Society.

37. Quoted in William J. Lanouette, “The New Right – ‘Revolutionaries’ Out after the ‘Lunch-Pail’ Vote,” *National Journal*, January 21, 1978, 89, as cited in Chelsea Ebin, *The Radical Mind: The Origins of Right-Wing Catholic and Protestant Coalition Building* (University Press of Kansas, 2024), 74.

38. Many commentators have noted that Falwell’s relationship with the Likud Party of Israeli Prime Minister Menachim Begin developed at the same time. Frequently, mention is made of the jet supposedly given to Falwell to facilitate his travels. Sean Durbin helpfully interrogates the strands of meaning-making involved in this dubious story in *Righteous Gentiles: Religion, Identity, and Myth in John Hagee’s Christians United for Israel* (Brill, 2018), esp. chapter 2.

39. Paul M. Weyrich, “Letter to Conservatives by Paul M. Weyrich,” National Center for Public Policy Research, February 16, 1999, <https://nationalcenter.org/ncpppr/1999/02/16/letter-to-conservatives-by-paul-m-weyrich/>. Although Weyrich doesn’t “go into the whole history of the Frankfurt School and Herbert Marcuse and the other people responsible for” this “Cultural Marxism,” the phrase has been taken up by generations of New Right activists, including James Lindsay and Christopher Rufo in their recent orchestrated attack on critical race theory. The phrase “Cultural Marxism” is explicitly antisemitic, echoing the specific Nazi accusation that the Frankfurt School, primarily associated with Jewish social theorists, promoted Kulturbolschewismus (Cultural Bolshevism). See Ari Paul, “‘Cultural Marxism’: The Mainstreaming of a Nazi Trope,” *Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting*, June 4, 2019, <https://fair.org/home/cultural-marxism-the-mainstreaming-of-a-nazi-trope/>.

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Soon afterward, in 2001, Weyrich commissioned a manifesto for the future of what he called the “New Traditionalist Movement.” While not exclusively Christian, the movement would be bound by “a belief that each individual has a duty to obey a higher law than his own will and appetite.” In political terms, this New Traditionalist movement would not waste time attempting to transform existing systems and institutions. Instead, the goal was to weaken, destroy, and eventually rebuild. Rather than waiting passively, Weyrich insisted, “Our strategy will be to bleed this corrupt culture dry. We will pick off the most intelligent and creative individuals in our society, the individuals who help give credibility to the current regime” while “launch[ing] a movement with more energy and more intensity than our opponents are capable of summoning,” causing “the reigning leftist regime [to] collapse from lack of support.”<sup>40</sup>

This deeper history of the ideological context of the New Right – especially the vision articulated and implemented by its chief architect, Paul Weyrich – helps accurately interpret Project Esther’s significance. While presented as a program for combatting antisemitism, the program’s effects have furthered the anti-foreigner and anti-institutional aims of the Trump administration. Specifically, the program has resulted in assaults on elite universities, often described by New Right ideologues as bastions of the “reigning leftist regime” Weyrich decried and sought to destroy.

Since Project Esther and Project 2025 both sprang from the white Christian nationalist bosom of the Heritage Foundation, it should be no surprise that its activities were concerned exclusively with progressive criticism of the State of Israel rather than any antisemitism from the right. The New York Times reported that Project Esther “exclusively focuses on antisemitism on the left, ignoring antisemitic harassment and violence from the right. It has drawn criticism from many Jewish organizations amid increasing calls for them to push back against the Trump administration.”<sup>41</sup>

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40. Eric Heubeck, “The Integration of Theory and Practice: A Program for the New Traditionalist Movement,” Center for Cultural Conservatism (Free Congress Foundation, 2001), archived online at <https://web.archive.org/web/20010713152425/http://www.freecongress.org/centers/conservatism/traditionalist.htm>.

41. Baker, “The Group Behind Project 2025.”

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Moreover, Project Esther used curiously antisemitic logic to make its point. A report from The Forward based on internal documents suggested that “antisemitism’s ecosystem” included a list of “masterminds” seeking to “dismantle Western democracies, values and culture.” The list of “progressive ‘elites’ leading the way” included Jewish leaders like George Soros and Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker.<sup>42</sup> As several historians have shown, Christian Zionism has long coexisted with antisemitism. The Heritage Foundation appears interested in reinvesting in that tradition while pursuing illiberal goals of harming the critical capacities of US higher education. Rather than a principled approach to identifying and confronting antisemitism, partisan efforts like Project Esther seek to exploit Jews for the purposes of partisan culture wars against “Cultural Marxism.”

It is helpful to understand Project Esther as a Christian-led, Christian Zionist political program. Although many Jews were concerned about how the project enabled clearly illiberal efforts to muzzle and punish analysis and speech that deviated from contemporary Israeli propaganda, many Jews hesitated to speak out. In April 2025, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs issued a press statement warning against “the false choice between confronting antisemitism and upholding democracy.”<sup>43</sup> Several large Jewish defense leagues refused to sign this statement. Perhaps the abstaining organizations remembered when, in 1994, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) published *The Religious Right: The Assault on Tolerance & Pluralism in America*, which offered a sustained critique of the New Right.<sup>44</sup> The book zeroed in on Pat Robertson but also included sections criticizing Paul Weyrich and Jerry Falwell. The Christian Coalition produced a 29-page dossier titled “A Campaign of Falsehoods: The Anti-Defamation League’s Defamation of Religious Conservatives.”<sup>45</sup> Later, in 2005, when John Hagee’s organization, Christians United for Israel, was being unveiled, the ADL was again critical. “Their goal is to implement their Christian worldview,” ADL director Abraham Foxman wrote. “To Christianize America. To save us!” At the same time, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism,

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42. Arno Rosenfeld, “Scoop: Internal Project Esther Documents Describe Conspiracy of Jewish ‘Masterminds’ Seeking to Dismantle Western Values,” *The Forward*, December 6, 2024, <https://forward.com/news/680626/project-esther-heritage-jewish-conspiracy-antisemitism/>.

43. Jewish Council for Public Affairs, “Broad Coalition of Mainstream Jewish Organizations Release Statement.”

44. Anti-Defamation League, *The Religious Right: The Assault on Tolerance & Pluralism in America* (ADL, 1994).

45. “ADL and Christian Right Continue War of Words over Critical Report,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, August 10, 1994, <https://www.jta.org/archive/adl-and-christian-right-continue-war-of-words-over-critical-report>.

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criticized Christian “zealots” for focusing on “anti-gay bigotry” rather than more pressing social needs. Conservative Christian reaction to this rhetoric was strong, with one leader warning that evangelicals might “get fed up with this and say, ‘Well, all right then. If that’s the way you feel, then we just won’t support Israel anymore.’”<sup>46</sup>

Project Esther thus continues the foundational Christian Zionist practice of instrumentalizing Jews for Christian purposes. As with the earliest historical foundations of Anglo-American Christian Zionism I have charted in previous research, this Judeophilia serves the purpose of denigrating Islam and Muslims.<sup>47</sup> Weyrich contributed to this tradition. In 2002, in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attack on the United States, Weyrich and his longtime collaborator William S. Lind co-authored a pamphlet titled “Why Islam Is a Threat to America and the West.” Describing Islam as a “religion of war,” the pamphlet goes on to say that Muslims in the United States “should be encouraged to leave. They are a fifth column in this country.”<sup>48</sup> This form of anti-Islamic rhetoric has combined in the New Right with white Christian nationalist rhetoric to produce warnings against what longtime anti-Islamic activist Frank Gaffney calls the “Red-Green Axis,” an “increasingly dangerous alliance between Communists and Sharia-supremacists in America.”<sup>49</sup> Although a greater historical distance from the present may inform more precise analysis, it currently appears that Project Esther is best understood as a Christian Zionist project that instrumentalizes Jews through the weaponization of antisemitism to serve the cultural and political interests of white Christian nationalism.

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46. E.J. Kessler and Marc Perelman, “Foxman Blasts Campaign to ‘Christianize’ American Life,” *The Forward*, November 11, 2005; and Jennifer Siegel, “Christian Right Leader Warns Foxman on Israel,” *The Forward*, December 23, 2005.

47. See Smith, *More Desired*, esp. chapter 3. The anti-Islamic component of early Christian Zionism is traced effectively in Andrew Crome, *Christian Zionism and English National Identity, 1600–1850* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). The theme is confirmed through the many references to Islam and “the Turk” throughout Donald M. Lewis, *A Short History of Christian Zionism: From the Reformation to the Twenty-First Century* (IVP Academic, 2021). My use of “Judeophilia” rather than “philosemitism” is informed by the reframing of historical discussions of antisemitism offered by Jonathan Judaken, “Rethinking Anti-Semitism: Introduction,” *American Historical Review* 123, no. 4 (October 2018): 1122–1138. Judaken’s insights are used to good effect to frame the studies in *Judeophobia and the New Testament: Texts and Contexts*, ed. Sarah E. Rollens, Eric M. Vanden Eykel, and Meredith J.C. Warren (Eerdmans, 2025).

48. Cited in Nicholas D. Kristof, “Bigotry in Islam – and Here,” *New York Times*, July 9, 2002, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/07/09/opinion/bigotry-in-islam-and-here.html>. The pamphlet has become emblematic of post-9/11 Islamophobia. See the 12-page pamphlet: Paul M. Weyrich and William S. Lind, *Essays on Our Times: Why Islam is a Threat to America and the West* (Free Congress Foundation, 2002).

49. See Frank Gaffney, X Post, July 18, 2025, <https://x.com/frankgaffney/status/1946266529181430072>. This tweet highlighted an event Gaffney held with, among others, anti-Muslim author Robert Spencer.

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### *The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation*

The corporations underwriting the think tanks supporting both the innovative jurisprudence of ICJ Judge Julia Sebutinde and the cultural domination of Project Esther have one interest: making money. It should be little surprise, then, that well-connected Christian Zionists have found a new way to profit directly from the genocide being perpetrated in Gaza: the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF). While armament manufacturers have long profited from Israel's use of military force on Palestinians and throughout the region it claims as its sphere of influence, the GHF has provided direct access to the implementation of Israel's policies.

The GHF was established by the United States in February 2025 with the stated goal of delivering humanitarian aid to Palestinian civilians in Gaza. Intended to “bypass the UN as the main supplier of aid to Palestinians,” the Israel-supported GHF was soon accused by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres of creating “inherently unsafe” conditions for aid-seekers.<sup>50</sup> In May 2025, the GHF's first executive director, Jake Wood, resigned from the organization, urging Israel to allow more aid into the occupied area while saying the organization's intentions could not be implemented “while also strictly adhering to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence.”<sup>51</sup> Early in June, as GHF faced resounding criticism for not preventing civilian deaths at aid distribution sites, former USAID administrator John Acree was appointed as interim executive director; Rev. Johnnie Moore Jr. was named as GHF executive chairman.<sup>52</sup>

Johnnie Moore is a former campus pastor at Liberty University and traveling assistant to Jerry Falwell Sr.<sup>53</sup> He successfully parlayed the network of relationships developed

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50. Ione Wells, “Israeli Military Investigates 'Reports of Harm to Civilians' after Hundreds Killed Near Gaza Aid Sites,” *BBC News*, June 30, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cj9vveg0vp9o>.

51. Jeremy Diamond, Hira Humayun and Jessie Yeung, “Head of Controversial US-backed Gaza Aid Group Resigns, Citing Concerns over Independence and Impartiality,” *CNN*, May 27, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/05/26/middleeast/gaza-humanitarian-foundation-aid-resigns-intl-hnk>.

52. Andrew Roth, “Israel-backed Gaza Delivery Group Names US Evangelical Leader as Chair,” *The Guardian*, June 3, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/03/gaza-humanitarian-foundation-chair-johnnie-moore>.

53. On Moore's relationship with the elder Falwell and Liberty University, see Michelle Boorstein, “Liberty University's Johnnie Moore Speaks the Language of Young Evangelicals,” *Washington Post*, October 15, 2011, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/liberty-universitys-johnnie-moore-speaks-the-language-of-young-evangelicals/2011/09/26/gIQAvWC3mL\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/liberty-universitys-johnnie-moore-speaks-the-language-of-young-evangelicals/2011/09/26/gIQAvWC3mL_story.html).

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through Falwell into serving as a point of interface between evangelicals, Jewish organizations, Hollywood, and the Trump administration. He serves on the boards of several Jewish organizations, including the Anti-Defamation League and the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews.<sup>54</sup> Within the Trump administration, he joins a fleet of evangelicals, including self-identified Christian Zionist Mike Huckabee.

In its functional goal of sidestepping the United Nations as the legitimate overseer of Israeli and other governmental actions in Gaza (alongside other occupied Palestinian territories), the GHF brings several benefits for Israeli policy. In its sidelining of the UN, the GHF advances Israel's broader strategy to undermine the applicability of international law to policies and actions it considers domestic policies. The GHF is a US-supplied tool for helping Israel implement and expand its prerogatives within a self-declared "state of exception."<sup>55</sup> First and foremost, however, the Israeli goal of extinguishing UN oversight of its activities in Gaza is an extension of its longstanding effort to eliminate the legal category of Palestinian refugee. The expunging of this category has the triple benefit of 1) removing Israel's responsibility of care and protection for a displaced civilian population under the Geneva Conventions; 2) categorically erasing the Palestinian right of return to lands from which those refugees were forced to leave in 1948; and 3) redefining the Palestinian residents of Gaza (and potentially other Israeli-controlled territories) as foreign non-citizens subject to deportation.<sup>56</sup> The GHF, with the leadership of Mike Huckabee and Johnnie Moore, demonstrates direct Christian Zionist participation in the eradication-oriented, genocidal plan long argued for by the State of Israel and realized through US visions of Gaza as a tech-bro "Riviera" or a new colonial holding beyond the control of the UN.<sup>57</sup>

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54. Yonat Shimron, "Johnnie Moore, Prominent Pro-Israel Evangelical, Named Chair of Gaza Aid Group," *Religion News Service*, June 5, 2025, <https://religionnews.com/2025/06/05/johnnie-moore-prominent-evangelical-and-israel-supporter-to-head-aid-group/>.

55. On the foundations of the theological and legal concept, see Robert O. Smith, "State(s) of Exception: Christian Zionism, Replacement Theology, and the Right of Conquest," in *T&T Clark Handbook of Political Theology*, ed. Rubén Rosario Rodríguez (Bloomsbury / T & T Clark, 2019).

56. On this legal background, see Raja Shehadeh, *Occupier's Law: Israel and the West Bank* (Institute for Palestine Studies, 1985); Michael Sfar, *The Wall and the Gate: Israel, Palestine, and the Legal Battle for Human Rights* (Metropolitan Books, 2018); and Noura Erakat, *Justice for Some: Law and the Question of Palestine* (Stanford University Press, 2019).

57. See Aamer Madhani, Tia Goldenberg, and Zeke Miller, "Trump Won't Rule Out Deploying US Troops to Support Rebuilding Gaza, Sees 'Long-term' US Ownership," *Associated Press*, February 5, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/trump-netanyahu-washington-ceasefire-1c8deec4dd46177e08e07d669d595ed3>; see also James Landale and Otilie Mitchell, "Tony Blair in Discussions to Run Transitional Gaza Authority," *BBC News*, September 26, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c3drmk95xlzo>. If Johnnie Moore's doctoral dissertation provides any clue, he approaches his work with the GHF through theories of "track II diplomacy" and the commitments of Christian Zionism. See Johnnie Moore, "Evangelicals as Zionists and Peacemakers in Arab and Israeli Peacemaking through Track II Diplomacy," PhD dissertation, Liberty University, 2024.

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The GHF, besides orchestrating atrocities within Israel's genocide in Gaza, is part of the war profiteering long a feature of Israel's occupation policies. In July 2025, Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, issued a report detailing the corporate profits being generated from Israel's genocide in Gaza. "For some," she said, "genocide is profitable."<sup>58</sup> War profiteering is in no way unique to this settler-colonial occupation or its (apparently) culminating genocidal moment. Indeed, this genocide and its profiteering demonstrate the tragically normal, non-exceptional nature of the Zionist project in the State of Israel. It is here, however, that the neoliberal economic interests fueling the intellectual output and political efficacy of rightwing think tanks come full circle.

Neoliberal economic theory's relentless commodification of all existence limits any ethical critique. Friedrich Hayek, the movement's primary progenitor, wrote several essays discrediting the notion of "social justice," saying in 1976 that he had "come to regard 'social justice' as nothing more than an empty formula, conventionally used to assert that a particular claim is justified without giving any reason."<sup>59</sup> More recently, neoliberal economic assumptions have fused with the political theories embraced by new tech-enriched oligarchies to challenge the very foundations of democracy and the nation-state.<sup>60</sup>

This blend of tech oligarchy, monarchist thinking, and societal nihilism has resulted in what Naomi Klein and Astra Taylor have dubbed "end times fascism."<sup>61</sup>

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58. United Nations, "Forever-Occupation, Genocide, and Profit: Special Rapporteur's Report Exposes Corporate Forces behind Destruction of Palestine," July 3, 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/07/forever-occupation-genocide-and-profit-special-rapporteurs-report-exposes>. For the report itself, see Francesca Albanese, "From Economy of Occupation to Economy of Genocide: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied since 1967," UN Human Rights Council, June 16–July 11, 2025, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/a-hrc-59-23-from-economy-of-occupation-to-economy-of-genocide-report-special-rapporteur-francesca-albanese-palestine-2025/>.

59. Friedrich von Hayek, "The Atavism of Social Justice," in *Social Justice, Socialism & Democracy: Three Australian Lectures by F.A. Hayek* (Centre for Independent Studies, 1979), 3, 13. The phrase, Hayek suggests, is "irreconcilable with the order, the productivity, and the peace of a great society of free men" since its "moral claim on government gives us what it can take by force from those who in the game of catallaxy have been more successful than we have been."

60. One of those self-styled theorists is Curtis Yarvin. See his *Gray Mirror: Fascicle I: Disturbance* (Passage Press, 2024). For a critical assessment of these developments, see Quinn Slobodian, *Hayek's Bastards: Race, Gold, IQ, and the Capitalism of the Far Right* (Zone Books, 2025).

61. Naomi Klein and Astra Taylor, "The Rise of End Times Fascism," *The Guardian*, April 13, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2025/apr/13/end-times-fascism-far-right-trump-musk>.

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The movement they describe draws from apocalyptic imagery familiar to many evangelical Christian Zionists. This is especially true of Peter Thiel's sustained reflections on his understanding of "the Antichrist." Thiel is a South African-born co-founder of both PayPal and Palantir, a company directly named in Rapporteur Albanese's report on war profiteering in the Gaza genocide.

After addressing the theme in speeches and essays throughout the 2000s, Thiel delivered a four-part lecture series titled "The Antichrist" in September 2025 that he billed as a "political theology" (à la Carl Schmitt). The event was organized by associates of venture capitalists and directors of companies developing autonomous weapons systems. According to a summary of notes published of the "off the record" sessions, "Thiel argued that because we are increasingly concerned about existential threats, the time is ripe for the Antichrist to rise to power, promising peace and safety by strangling technological progress with regulation."<sup>62</sup> Just as Hayek warned that even moderate state intervention created a slippery slope toward Communism and Project 2025 decried any "government control of the economy,"<sup>63</sup> Thiel's apocalyptic warnings about the Antichrist turn out to be warnings against anything other than the unfettered capitalist development of technology. Anything else results in "one-world government."<sup>64</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Christian Zionism continues to be a matter of pressing concern. Scholarly attempts to understand the movement as a religious or theological concern remain worthwhile. Nevertheless, the movement's importance as a component within diplomatic and security dynamics has reached new heights. Christian Zionism is a vital cipher for decoding the inner workings of international affairs. Current realities pertaining to Gaza have established, yet again, that Christian Zionism informs matters of life and death.

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62. James Hurley, "Regulating AI Hastens the Antichrist, Says Palantir's Peter Thiel," *The Thursday Times*, September 25, 2025, <https://www.thetimes.com/business-money/technology/article/palantir-founder-peter-thiel-antichrist-lectures-religion-qzmpth35t>. I am grateful to Crystal Silva-McCormick for bringing Thiel's "contributions" to my attention.

63. Kevin D. Roberts, "Foreword: A Promise to America," in *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*, ed. Paul Dans and Steven Groves (The Heritage Foundation, 2023), 14. This 2023 version of *Mandate for Leadership* is the guidebook of the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025. It is the ninth iteration of the Mandate series since the Reagan administration.

64. Thiel, cited in Ross Douthat, "Peter Thiel and the Antichrist," *New York Times*, June 26, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/26/opinion/peter-thiel-antichrist-ross-douthat.html>.

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The direct involvement of Christian Zionists in enabling and implementing Israel’s policies is echoed in the US domestic policing of dissenting voices to further anti-immigration policies. The three case studies presented here—Judge Sebutinde of the International Court of Justice, the Heritage Foundation’s Project Esther, and the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation—present distinct expressions of Christian Zionism that are, at the same time, woven together through the interests of US-based rightwing think tanks. Those interests include the culture war politics of white Christian nationalism and neoliberal economics. The present global crisis of Israel’s ongoing genocide in Gaza—including that state’s unceasing efforts to discredit and dismantle the United Nations and the international law it seeks to interpret and enact—is inseparable from the practical workings of Christian Zionism.

**Robert O. Smith** is the Vice President and Dean of Academic Affairs at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.



Image credit: File:Marco Rubio visits Israel from September 14-16, 2025 - 29.jpg, Wikimedia Commons contributors, *Wikimedia Commons*.

# How Christian Zionists Wield Electoral Power in the United States

By Halah Ahmad

## INTRODUCTION

While Christian Zionism may represent a minority religious ideology in the United States, its influence has a long history.<sup>1</sup> This article surfaces the ways Christian Zionists have wielded electoral power to usher in the most Christian Zionist US government in history under the Trump administration. While many have invoked “fascism,” “Christian nationalism,” and “white supremacy” as monikers for the threat of this US administration, the influence of all these ideologies is encapsulated in the fundamentalist logic of Christian Zionism. To discount this religious ideology’s influence disguises the fuller intent and scope of the harmful policies the Trump administration

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1. Saafya Alnaqib, "American Evangelicals' Unique Support for Israel," *Chicago Council on Global Affairs*, September 3, 2024, <https://globalaffairs.org/commentary-and-analysis/blogs/american-evangelicals-unique-support-israel>.

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has implemented at a staggering rate. Beyond the policies outlined in Project 2025, an inability to recognize Christian Zionism's particular influence can hamper political prognostication and strategic response. Indeed, analysis of the United States' relationship to Israel and the Middle East often fails to even mention the influence of Christian Zionist advocacy or power, thereby failing to diagnose moves beyond capitalist interest. As the United States enables the Israeli regime's ongoing genocide in Gaza and risks regional warfare with attacks on Iran, Lebanon, Syria, and elsewhere, understanding the theological imperatives guiding policy becomes essential: rather than hawkish missteps, these are deliberate steps toward supposed biblical end times, at the cost of tens of thousands of lives.<sup>2</sup>

As this essay demonstrates, Christian Zionism's growth in power is not purely a side effect of recent global rightward shifts against democracy as some may assume, but has for decades been a method aimed and then used to suppress democratic measures to gain electoral and administrative power in the United States.<sup>3</sup> Even as younger Christian evangelicals move away from pro-Israel fidelity, those in power maintain a right-wing supremacy doctrine intertwined with Christian nationalism and racial capitalism.<sup>4</sup>

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2. Ellie Geranmayeh, "Israel and Iran on the Brink: Preventing the Next War," *European Union Institute for Security Studies*, October 2025, <https://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/briefs/israel-and-iran-brink-preventing-next-war>; *Al Jazeera*, "Israel Ramps up Lebanon Strikes as Hezbollah Vows to Defend Itself," November 6, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/11/6/israel-ramps-up-lebanon-strikes-as-hezbollah-vows-to-defend-itself>; Justin Salhani, "Israeli Attacks on Syria: What Happened, Who Did Israel Claim It Was After?," *Al Jazeera*, November 30, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/11/30/israel-attacks-on-syria-what-happened-who-did-israel-claim-it-was-after>.

3. Zack Beauchamp, "Why the Far Right Is Surging All over the World," *Vox*, July 17, 2024, <https://www.vox.com/politics/361136/far-right-authoritarianism-germany-reactionary-spirit>; Richard Wike, Moira Fagan, and Laura Clancy, "Global Elections in 2024: What We Learned in a Year of Political Disruption," *Pew Research Center*, December 11, 2024.

4. Shibley Telhami, "As Israel Increasingly Relies on US Evangelicals for Support, Younger Ones are Walking Away: What Polls Show," *Brookings Institution*, May 26, 2021; Halah Ahmad and Mimi Kirk, "The Dangerous Exceptionalism of Christian Zionism," *Al-Shabaka*, October 3, 2023, <https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/the-dangerous-exceptionalism-of-christian-zionism/>. See also Kristin Kobes Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation*, Calvin University, June 23, 2020, <https://calvin.edu/publications/jesus-and-john-wayne-how-white-evangelicals-corrupted-faith-and-fractured-nation>; Greg Burris, "Escaping the Zionist Circle: Notes on Racial Capitalism and the Black Radical Tradition," *Journal of Holy Land and Palestine Studies* 23, no. 2 (2024): 257-71; Nahla Abdo, "Racial Capitalism: From British Colonialism to the Settler-Colonial Apartheid State," *Journal of Holy Land and Palestine Studies* 23, no. 2 (2024): 187-203.

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The result is a movement that has helped to foster, insulate, and embolden a racist global war machine: the Israeli regime alongside the United States. Amid global geopolitical entropy and climate disaster, this form of fascism represents a threat to all notions of global cooperation, international legal order, and distributive economic systems. But to Christian Zionists, even the poorest among them, such is the prophesized precursor to Jesus's return.<sup>5</sup>

Amid an urgent historical moment, understanding the rise and scale of Christian Zionist power is as critical as understanding its ideological contours.<sup>6</sup> The electoral power this religious political group now wields is coupled with decreased democratic accountability across the US electoral system, and, namely, the unfettered influence of monied interests.<sup>7</sup> The foundations of this philosophy are already shaking with younger Christian evangelicals, but the consolidated power of older Christian Zionists makes such shifts less impactful electorally without a larger, intersectional mass movement. To that end, this article discusses the counterintuitive political economy of this movement and concludes with how Christian Zionism's electoral history bears on present efforts to wield electoralism for Palestinian rights.

### 20TH CENTURY POLITICAL POWER

Christian Zionists have successfully leveraged electoral politics to gain power and influence in Congress for longer than many realize; they represent the most unwavering and largest front for the pro-Israel lobby in the United States, surpassing Jewish or secular Zionist groups. Understanding their growth in the 20th century demonstrates the convergence of cultural narrative and both imperial and economic interests.

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5. Stephen R. Sizer, *Christian Zionists: On the Road to Armageddon* (electronic book), *Presence Ministries International*, 2004, [https://stephensizer.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/ebook\\_sizer.pdf](https://stephensizer.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/ebook_sizer.pdf); Max Blumenthal, "The Christian Zionist Leading the International Court of Justice," *Transcend Media Service*, February 2025, <https://www.transcend.org/tms/2025/02/the-christian-zionist-leading-the-international-court-of-justice>.

6. For a deeper look at the ideology, see Sizer, *Christian Zionists*.

7. Samuel Breidbart, "The Supreme Court's Presidential Immunity Ruling Undermines Democracy," *Brennan Center for Justice*, October 1, 2024, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/supreme-courts-presidential-immunity-ruling-undermines-democracy>; "How Does the Citizens United Decision Still Affect Us in 2025?" *Campaign Legal Center*, January 21, 2025, <https://campaignlegal.org/update/how-does-citizens-united-decision-still-affect-us-2025>; Ross Sherman, "Report: Most Americans' Votes Don't Matter In Deciding Elections," *Unite America*, April 14, 2025, <https://www.uniteamerica.org/articles/report-most-americans-votes-dont-matter-in-deciding-elections>.

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Christian Zionist ideology first took root in the United States in part due to post-World War II interest in the region as a site of contestation for geopolitical power, with seemingly righteous US interest pitted against totalitarian communist Soviets and others.<sup>8</sup> In other words, the Middle East was a proxy battleground for the Cold War, with the United States vying for a “benevolent supremacy” over the Soviet Union – especially as European powers’ influence receded and access to Middle East oil resources became more critical and contested.<sup>9</sup>

For Americans, this warfare was imbued with religious and moral overtones and a sense of providence for their nation’s role in re-shaping the international world order – in part because of the influence of popular religious fiction in film and literature throughout the 1950s and early 1960s and 1970s. Epics like *The Robe* and *The Ten Commandments* became top-grossing movies in the United States, and Leon Uris’s book *Exodus* spent 80 weeks on the bestseller list before becoming the most popular film in America by 1961. These media covered biblical stories of the Exodus and apocalyptic notions from Revelations, with directors and commentators making direct allegories to modern political dynamics involving Israel, the Soviet Union, and anti-colonial struggles.<sup>10</sup> Viewers were primed to draw pseudo-religious comparisons to an evolving US foreign policy in the Middle East. For example, 1956’s *Ten Commandments* retold the story of Moses leading his people from slavery and against the oppression of the Pharaoh, while Uris’s *Exodus* depicted the establishment of Israel and Zionism as a modern epic of the same nature in which Jewish people were escaping persecution in Europe. Using a combination of reality, biblical story, and fiction, these films engendered sympathy for the budding Zionist colonial project, while casting the United States in a similar anti-authoritarian light against Soviet interests and the sunseting of colonial powers.

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8. Charles C. Hilliard, *Supremacy and Peace: The Principle of Benevolent Sovereignty in Search of a Political Party* (North River Press, 1956).

9. Hilliard, *Supremacy and Peace*; Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945–2000* (University of California Press, 2001), chapter 1; Rashid Khalidi, “The Superpowers and the Cold War in the Middle East,” in *The Middle East and the United States: History, Politics, and Ideology*, 6th edition, ed. David Lesch and Mark Haas (Routledge, 2018), 157–176.

10. McAlister, *Epic Encounters*.

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This cultural phenomenon would bear significantly on the budding US-Israel relationship in the aftermath of the 1967 “Naksa,” the six-day war in which Israel took control of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights, beginning an almost 60-year military occupation to date. Israel’s massive land grab struck the US audience – particularly evangelical Christians – as steeped in biblical narrative. Christian magazine editor L. Nelson Bell captured the prevailing sentiment, writing that the Israeli victory “gives [the] student of the Bible a renewed faith in the accuracy and validity of the Bible.” Many evangelicals viewed the Zionist state’s sudden and massive territorial seizure as a modern manifestation of the pseudo-biblical prophecies widely circulating in public discourse.<sup>11</sup>

The trend intensified in the 1970s, when readership for religious literature in the United States more than doubled.<sup>12</sup> It was then that Hal Lindsay’s *The Late Great Planet Earth*, a fictionalized account of biblical prophecy in Palestine, became a *New York Times* bestseller with millions of readers.<sup>13</sup> At this critical juncture of the Middle East becoming a site of vital importance to US dominance, televangelists and the state would soon capitalize on popular religious interest to signify, and seek divine alignment between, US foreign policy and supposed biblical prophecy.<sup>14</sup>

Leaning into this cultural phenomenon, two televangelists became some of the most influential leaders of the 20th century Christian Zionist movement: Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson. Both used their media and pastoral platforms for extensive grassroots campaigns to influence elections and politicians in power. Falwell established The Moral Majority in 1979, a movement that activated thousands of churches and millions of registered voters for collective political action and votes.<sup>15</sup> By 2003, successive versions of this Christian Zionist lobby became the Republican Party’s largest voting bloc, with close ties between its leadership and the Israeli government from the outset.<sup>16</sup>

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11. McAlister, *Epic Encounters*, chapter 5 via CBS Evening News, August 7, 1980. Accessible by request at <https://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu/siteindex/1980-8>.

12. McAlister, *Epic Encounters*.

13. Erin A. Smith, “The Late Great Planet Earth Made the Apocalypse a Popular Concern,” *HUMANITIES* 38, no. 1 (Winter 2017), <https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2017/winter/feature/the-late-great-planet-earth-made-the-apocalypse-popular-concern>.

14. McAlister, *Epic Encounters*, chapter 1.

15. Michael Sean Winters, *God’s Right Hand: How Jerry Falwell Made God a Republican and Baptized the American Right* (HarperCollins, 2012).

16. Chip Berlet and Jean Hardisty, *Drifting Right and Going Wrong: An Overview of the U.S. Political Right* (Political Research Associates, 2003).

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Falwell, for instance, was reportedly given a jet by Israel and was bestowed an award (the Jabotinsky Centennial Medal) by Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin in 1980.<sup>17</sup> When Begin unilaterally bombed Iraq's nuclear reactor in 1981 he called Falwell for support from the evangelical base to defend Israel's actions.<sup>18</sup> Falwell repeated Begin's narrative about the bombing to his parishioners and across major media, contesting the National Council of Churches' opposition to the attack.<sup>19</sup> This move was critical to counter public pressure on Reagan to stop weapons shipments to Israel due to the attack, and it helped solidify US Christian support for Begin as he looked to shore up his international image in the midst of a legislative election for his Likud Party.<sup>20</sup> Begin would also direct the Tourism Bureau to bring fundamentalist pastors like Falwell for "Holy Tours," a model that continued to grow as an Israeli political courtship tactic.<sup>21</sup> Both Falwell and Robertson had close ties to the Reagan administration, emphasizing the need to prepare for – or rather usher in – the battle of Armageddon, which Reagan referenced on multiple occasions.<sup>22</sup> It was in part for this reason that Reagan advocated for military strength in the United States, while he and Attorney General Edwin Meese reportedly prayed for Armageddon to come (though presumably they would be saved from it themselves through the rapture).<sup>23</sup>

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17. Rammy M. Haija, "The Armageddon Lobby: Dispensationalist Christian Zionism and the Shaping of U.S. Policy Towards Israel-Palestine," *Holy Land Studies* 5, no. 1 (2006): 75–95

18. For Reagan's reaction to the news, see Matthew L. Allen, "Reagan's Secure Line," *The New York Times*, June 7, 2010, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/07/opinion/07allen.html>.

19. Winters, *God's Right Hand*. See also UPI, "Moral Majority Leader Jerry Falwell Says Israeli Prime Minister...," July 6, 1981, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1981/07/06/Moral-Majority-leader-Jerry-Falwell-says-Israeli-Prime-Minister/7833363240000/>; Joe L. Kincheloe and George Staley, "The Menachem Begin-Jerry Falwell Connection: A Revolution in Fundamentalism," *Journal of Thought* 17, no. 2 (1982): 35–39.

20. Kincheloe and Staley, "The Menachem Begin-Jerry Falwell Connection." See also NLI, "1981 Elections," National Library of Israel, accessed December 3, 2025, [https://web.nli.org.il/sites/nli/english/collections/treasures/elections/all\\_elections/pages/e1981.aspx](https://web.nli.org.il/sites/nli/english/collections/treasures/elections/all_elections/pages/e1981.aspx).

21. Donald Wagner, "Short Fuse to Apocalypse?," *Sojourners Magazine*, July-August 2003, <https://sojo.net/magazine/july-august-2003/short-fuse-apocalypse>. See also Halah Ahmad, "Tourism in Service of Occupation and Annexation," *Al-Shabaka*, October 13, 2020, <https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/tourism-in-service-of-occupation-and-annexation/>.

22. John Herbers, "Religious Leaders Tell of Worry on 'Armageddon' View Ascribed to Reagan," *The New York Times*, October 21, 1984, <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/10/21/us/religious-leaders-tell-of-worry-on-armageddon-view-ascribed-to-reagan.html>. See also Wagner, "Short Fuse to Apocalypse?"

23. Ronnie Dugger, "Does Reagan Expect a Nuclear Armageddon?," *Washington Post*, April 18, 1984. While some believe the rapture will occur after a period of tribulations, this notion of the rapture complements the fact that leadership in the Reagan administration in 1983 was planning around the likely death of top US government officials at the start of any nuclear warfare, reportedly because of intelligence that the Soviets could take out leadership immediately. See, for instance Marc Ambinder, *The Brink: President Reagan and the Nuclear War Scare of 1983* (Simon & Schuster, 2018), chapter 8.

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Under Reagan, the United States participated actively in the warfare between Iran and Iraq in ways that show the marriage of US right-wing religious ideology and imperial economic interests. To be sure, the United States' interests in Iran predated Reagan; the CIA facilitated the 1953 coup that instated Reza Shah Pahlavi as monarch of Iran over the democratically-elected Mohammed Mossadegh, who had moved to nationalize Iranian oil resources (of which US companies owned 20% of profits).<sup>24</sup> Of course, the United States would then oppose Pahlavi's deposition in the Iranian Revolution of January 1979, which threatened roughly 3% of US oil supply.<sup>25</sup> The American public and US economy had already been jolted by oil prices just a few years before, when President Nixon backed Israel in the 1973 Yom Kippur War and OPEC countries responded by cutting off oil to the United States for five months – quadrupling oil prices and causing a global price shock that rattled the US dollar in addition to threatening roughly 7% of US oil consumption.<sup>26</sup> Hence when the United States backed Iraqi warfare against Iran, it was not without critical stakes in oil supply and profit upsets having rocked the past decade.

Following the revolution, Iran halted all multinational oil companies' operations, but the United States had already stopped sourcing oil from Iran during the 1979-81 hostage crisis that ended as Reagan took office. In addition, the shah had rejected Western attempts to renew their 1953 agreements for foreign companies' 50% stake in Iranian oil profits. Soon thereafter, the armageddonist Reagan backed Iraqi attacks on Khuzestan, an oil-producing province of Iran.

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24. This was on account of the Consortium Agreement of 1954, which gave 50% ownership of Iranian oil production to foreign companies, of which 40% belonged to five American companies. See an original copy of the agreement here: <https://inlibris.com/item/bn57173/> and official record here: US Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954, vol. X, doc. 449, "Telegram - The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Aldrich) to the Department of State," April 1, 1954, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v10/d449>. National Security Archive, "CIA Confirms Role in 1953 Iran Coup," August 19, 2013, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB435/>; *Al Jazeera*, "UK's Lead Role in 1953 Iran Coup d'État Exposed," August 18, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/8/18/uks-lead-role-in-1953-iran-coup-detat-exposed>.

25. This number draws from two sources. On US oil supply from Iran (555,000 barrels per day in 1978): US Energy Information Administration, "US Imports from Iran of Crude Oil and Petroleum Products (Thousand Barrels per Day)," accessed December 1, 2025, [https://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=pet&s=mttim\\_nus-nir\\_2&f=m](https://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=pet&s=mttim_nus-nir_2&f=m). On total US oil supply (18.8 million barrels per day): Office of Technology Assessment, US Congress, US Oil Import Vulnerability: The Technical Replacement Capability, US Government Printing Office, 1991, <https://www.princeton.edu/~ota/disk1/1991/9143/914304.PDF>.

26. Michael Corbett, "Oil Shock of 1973-74," Federal Reserve History, accessed December 3, 2025, <https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/oil-shock-of-1973-74>; Donald A. Watt, "Arab Oil Embargo of 1973," *Research Starters*, EBSCO Research, <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/arab-oil-embargo-1973>.

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Christian Zionists viewed the war and Reagan's escalatory moves against the new Islamic Republic as an awaited battle, while capitalist interests likewise sought stable oil supply and profits, especially relative to the Soviets.<sup>27</sup> In this foreign policy case study, cynically-aligned interests driven by religion and US capital would enable the deaths of half a million people, largely in Iran, over the course of that war.<sup>28</sup> This and other foreign policy measures were the subject of several private White House briefings for popular Christian Zionist figures like Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and Hal Lindsey.<sup>29</sup>

To complicate this picture, the Reagan administration was also covertly selling weapons to Iran in the infamous "Iran-Contra Affair." While the specifics of that controversy are complex, one of the lead architects was a key intermediary to the Christian Zionist lobby, Robert MacFarlane, alongside his aide at the National Security Council, Oliver North – a "born again" evangelical Christian Zionist.<sup>30</sup> As a national security advisor to Reagan, MacFarlane enlisted NSA resources to sell thousands of munitions to Iran under supposed agreements to return American hostages held by Iran-supported proxy groups.<sup>31</sup> The resulting US policy was both illegal and irrational, but it contributed to more destruction between two oil-rich countries, Iraq and Iran, and a weakening of both. What followed was a security agreement between Israel and the United States with no concessions, the 1981 Strategic Cooperation Agreement, which signified the start of closer coordination with Israel to deter Soviet threats and their like in the Middle East.<sup>32</sup>

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27. Herbers, "Religious Leaders Tell of Worry on 'Armageddon' View Ascribed to Reagan." There were negotiations throughout the 1970s to ensure continued oil supply after the Consortium Agreement's scheduled expiration in 1979. Federal intelligence notes record competing demands between the United States and the shah. See, for instance Department of State, "Intelligence Note RECN-36 Prepared in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, December 6, 1972," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, volume E-4: Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972*, United States Government Printing Office, 2006, doc. 239, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve04/d239>.

28. Ian Black. "Iran and Iraq Remember War that Cost More than a Million Lives," *The Guardian*, September 23, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/23/iran-iraq-war-anniversary>.

29. Donald Wagner, "Reagan and Begin, Bibi and Jerry: The Theopolitical Alliance of the Likud Party with the American Christian 'Right,'" *Arab Studies Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1998): 33-51.

30. Alessandra Stanley, "Faith in a True Believer," *Time*, February 16, 1987, <https://time.com/archive/6708373/faith-in-a-true-believer/>; Wagner, "Reagan and Begin, Bibi and Jerry. See also Seth Rogovoy, "The Secret Jewish History of Oliver North," *The Forward*, May 8, 2018, <https://forward.com/culture/400643/the-secret-jewish-history-of-oliver-north/>.

31. Peter Kornbluh and Malcolm Byrne, eds. "The Iran-Contra Affair 20 Years On," *National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book* No. 210, November 24, 2006, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB210/index.htm>.

32. Yale University Law School, "Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the United States and the Government of Israel on Strategic Cooperation, November 30, 1981," *Avalon Project*, accessed December 3, 2025, [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/21st\\_century/pal03.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/21st_century/pal03.asp); Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. and Israel Sign Strategic Accord to Counter Soviet Threat: Text of Memorandum," *The New York Times*, December 1, 1981, <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/12/01/world/us-israel-sign-strategic-accord-counter-soviet-text-memorandum-page-a14.html>.

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Meanwhile, Israel had invaded Lebanon to attack the PLO and refused to remove their forces until the PLO was ousted.<sup>33</sup> Notorious for their pro-Israel stances, MacFarlane and North ultimately represented early Christian Zionist power brokers willing to forgo democratic norms and allow American casualties in favor of ideological alignment with Israel. But they were not alone in their convictions; in fact, both North and MacFarlane were lauded and defended by a Christian Zionist lobby led by Pat Robertson. Even amid subsequent investigations and Robertson's prospective presidential bid, Robertson called North "a great American hero" and lauded the affair on his show, "The 700 Club."<sup>34</sup>

Marion "Pat" Robertson was a religious broadcaster and Southern Baptist Minister who founded and chaired the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN). After helping to elect Reagan, he himself ran for resident on the Republican ticket in 1988, coming in third after George H.W. Bush (Bush senior) and Bob Dole.<sup>35</sup> He then played a pivotal role in Bush senior's (unsuccessful) reelection campaign.<sup>36</sup> Robertson ultimately helped shepherd a path to mainstreaming both the modern Christian right's religious views and their access to political power through his political advocacy group, the Christian Coalition, through private meetings and lobbying of religious leaders, and through his nationwide television show. Bush senior's reelection campaign dramatically illustrated Robertson's influence in Republican politics at the highest level, though data on the degree of Robertson's illegal coordination with the campaign and electioneering did not emerge until several years later.<sup>37</sup> For example, Robertson personally chose over 30 Bush reelection campaign leaders, providing a list in 1992 of "persons [he] would like to see as Bush campaign co-chairmen." Then, when the Christian Coalition alerted the Bush campaign that their base favored

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33. Institute for Palestine Studies. "Lebanon War, 1982." n.d., <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1651350>.

34. Jess Bravin and Daniel M. Weintraub. "The Iran-Contra Hearings: Robertson Insists North Did Tell Him About Iran Trip in 1985," *Los Angeles Times*, July 15, 1987, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1987-07-15-mn-2508-story.html>; Stanley, "Faith in a True Believer."

35. Stephen D. Johnson, Joseph B. Tamney, and Ronald Burton, "Pat Robertson: Who Supported His Candidacy for President?," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 28, no. 4 (1989): 387–99.

36. Federal Election Com'n v. Christian Coalition, 52 F. Supp. 2d 45 (D.D.C. 1999), <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp2/52/45/2522449/>.

37. Federal Election Commission, "FEC v. Christian Coalition," accessed December 3, 2025, <https://www.fec.gov/legal-resources/court-cases/fec-v-christian-coalition/>; Brooks Jackson, "The Christian Coalition and George Bush," *CNN*, August 19, 1997, <https://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1997/08/19/christian.coalition/>; Westlaw, Federal Election Commission v. The Christian Coalition, No. CIV. A. 96-1781 (JHG) (D.D.C. Aug. 2, 1999), 52 F. Supp. 2d 45, <https://content.next.westlaw.com/Document/lf57986a7568d11d997e0acd5cbb90d3f/View/FullText.html>.

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Bush's opponent, Robertson interviewed Bush senior on "The 700 Club," using pre-determined questions and emphasizing Bush's "recourse to prayer." After the interview, the Christian Coalition distributed over 40 million voter guides across 100,000 churches to a targeted list of likely supporters, a list likely obtained illegally through campaign data coordination according to CNN documents.<sup>38</sup> Robertson had the ear of the Bush campaign in part due to his effectiveness, alongside Falwell, in organizing the Christian right in the lead-up to his own presidential campaign in 1988. From 1985 to 1990, the Christian Zionist lobby mobilized to overturn UN Resolution 3379, which in 1975 had declared Zionism a form of "racism and racial discrimination."<sup>39</sup> After the US Congress and president signed a resolution calling on the UN to repeal it, in 1985 the resolution was overturned – a rare redaction.<sup>40</sup> After years of advocacy from other Zionist groups such as the World Jewish Congress, the success of this effort was largely due to the National Christian Leadership Conference, affiliated with but older than Falwell's Moral Majority.<sup>41</sup>

The cultural and religious pretexts for the earlier 20th century justifications of US foreign policy in Palestine would emerge again in the 1990s on account of the influence and electoral organizing power of figures like Falwell and Robertson. Despite lawsuits following the Christian Coalition's illegal election activity, the group distributed 20 million voter guides in the 1992 elections and over 40 million voter guides in the 1996 midterm elections, including at over 22,000 churches.<sup>42</sup> Following on from the previous decades, the 1990s saw the United States cut off relations with Iran and impose sanctions. Since the Iran-Iraq War, Christian Zionists have closely watched periodic regional escalations and proxy wars,

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38. Jackson, "The Christian Coalition and George Bush."

39. United Nations General Assembly, "Resolution 3379 (XXX): 'Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination: Zionism as Racism,'" November 10, 1975, accessed December 3, 2025, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-181963>; Haija, "The Armageddon Lobby."

40. GovTrack.U.S., "Summary of H.J.Res. 457 (101st): Calling upon the United Nations to Repeal General Assembly Resolution 3379," accessed December 6, 2025, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/101/hjres457/summary>.

41. World Jewish Congress, "WJC 85th Anniversary," n.d., <https://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/85th-anniversary/fighting-delegitimization-the-united-nations-zionism-is-racism-resolution-a-case-study>.

42. Americans United for Separation of Church and State, "Christian Coalition Hopes to Mobilize Huge Christian Vote for 1992 Elections," *Church & State* 44 (1991). Brooks Jackson, "Christian Coalition Set for Voter-Guide Blitz," *The Washington Post*, November 2, 1996, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1996/11/02/christian-coalition-set-for-voter-guide-blitz/bec562e7-d780-40b2-a4d2-3ff412b8b8b1/>.

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with a pro-war orientation toward regional escalation and the prevention of a Palestinian state.<sup>43</sup>

In a revival of the 1970s trend, the *Left Behind* biblical-fiction series by Tim LaHaye, an associate of Falwell, became a multi-year *New York Times* bestseller. The series again drew the American public into a plot interpreting present politics within biblical apocalyptic dispensations approaching the end times. In 1996, the Christian Coalition, led by Ralph Reed, raised \$26 million to oppose Bill Clinton's election.<sup>44</sup> It would then raise a more modest \$3 million to support the election of George W. Bush, but the leadership of these movements was reconfiguring in this period.<sup>45</sup> Newer voices like Pastor John Hagee would begin to interpret post-Cold War and post-Soviet politics in terms of an armageddon war with Israel and the United States pitted against Muslim countries.<sup>46</sup> Relations with Iran continue to be central to this understanding of imminent war, and this is no more explicit than now with the current US administration and the June 2025 military campaign against Iran. US military campaigns alongside or via Israel in Gaza, Lebanon, and Yemen have all involved a vision for the protection and formation of Greater Israel among both the leading far-right Israeli government and among US Christian Zionists.

### 21ST CENTURY POLITICAL POWER

By the turn of the century the Christian right voting bloc had solidified its influence. As such, President George W. Bush (Bush junior) was also likely influenced by a combination of this Christian Zionist activism, US imperial interests, and his own belief system. While an evangelical “born again” Christian himself and notoriously religious, Bush junior was not as vocally adherent to such messianic Zionist views as his predecessors (e.g., Reagan),

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43. Jay Michaelson, “The Head of the Largest Christian Zionist Organization is No Friend to Israel – He Wants an Apocalypse There,” *The Forward*, April 16, 2024, <https://forward.com/opinion/603310/john-hagee-christian-zionist-iran-israel/>.

44. Jeremy R. Hatfield, “For God and Country: The Religious Right, the Reagan Administration, and the Cold War,” PhD dissertation, Ohio University, 2013, [https://etd.ohiolink.edu/acprod/odb\\_etd/ws/send\\_file/send?accession=ohiou1365158195&disposition=inline](https://etd.ohiolink.edu/acprod/odb_etd/ws/send_file/send?accession=ohiou1365158195&disposition=inline).

45. Hatfield, “For God and Country.”

46. See, for instance Pat Robertson, *The New World Order* (Word Publishing, 1991) and John Hagee, *Earth's Last Empire: The Final Game of Thrones* (Worthy Publishing, 2018).

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but ardently believed he was enacting the will of God through his foreign policy.<sup>47</sup> While Falwell was sometimes credited for his role in supporting Reagan's election, historian and Reagan biographer Lou Cannon posits a larger role for Falwell in Bush junior's election, noting that "George W. Bush almost certainly would have failed to win the presidency in 2000 without Mr. Falwell's evangelical foot soldiers."<sup>48</sup>

Bush junior's policies reveal Christian Zionist influence. Even as Bush made a show of chastising Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for expansions of Maale Adumim settlements east of Jerusalem, he generally looked away while such settlements undermined the Oslo Accords.<sup>49</sup> However disingenuous about Palestinian statehood and damaging Oslo may have been, these settlements were a clear physical obstacle to maintaining East Jerusalem as Palestine's capital.<sup>50</sup> Bush similarly backtracked on promises made in the Middle East Quartet's "roadmap for peace" and on Palestinian statehood in 2003 after receiving over 50,000 postcards from the Apostolic Congress, another Christian Zionist advocacy group, in opposition to peace talks between Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Ariel Sharon.<sup>51</sup> Then, after concluding his tenure as president, with no election to worry about, Bush spoke at a fringe Christian Zionist organization known for its Jewish conversion agenda to usher in the end times: the Messianic Jewish Bible Institute conference.<sup>52</sup>

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47. Ron Suskind, "Faith, Certainty and the Presidency of George W. Bush," *New York Times Magazine*, October 17, 2004, [https://w.leadingtowar.com/PDFsources\\_mythic\\_reality/2\\_NYT.pdf](https://w.leadingtowar.com/PDFsources_mythic_reality/2_NYT.pdf); Paul Boyer, "Give Me that End-Time Religion: The Politicization of Prophetic Belief in Contemporary America," *Reflections*, Spring 2005, <https://reflections.yale.edu/article/end-times-and-end-gamesis-scripture-being-left-behind/give-me-end-time-religion>.

48. Lou Cannon and Carl M. Cannon, *Reagan's Disciple: George W. Bush's Troubled Quest for a Presidential Legacy* (PublicAffairs, 2008).

49. The Economist, "Israeli Settlements and the Palestinian Uprising," April 26, 2001, <https://www.economist.com/international/2001/04/26/israeli-settlements-and-the-palestinian-uprising>; Aaron D. Miller and Daniel Kurtzer, "Let's Not Pretend Washington Ever Really Tried to Stop Israeli Settlements," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 22, 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2019/11/lets-not-pretend-washington-ever-really-tried-to-stop-israeli-settlements-november-22-2019?lang=en>.

50. Ali Abunimah et al., "Focus On: 25 Years of Oslo," *Al-Shabaka*, September 13, 2018, <https://al-shabaka.org/policy-focus/focus-on-25-years-of-oslo/>; Miller and Kurtzer, "Let's Not Pretend."

51. John Tarleton, "In Line for the Rapture," *AlterNet*, May 25, 2004, [https://www.alternet.org/2004/05/in\\_line\\_for\\_the\\_rapture](https://www.alternet.org/2004/05/in_line_for_the_rapture); Khaled Elgindy, "The Middle East Quartet: A Post-Mortem," *Brookings*, February 12, 2012, [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/02\\_middle\\_east\\_elgindy\\_b-1.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/02_middle_east_elgindy_b-1.pdf).

52. Kenneth Derstine, "George Bush Set to Speak to Christian End-Times Group That Calls for Conversion of Jews," *Mondoweiss*, November 13, 2013, <https://mondoweiss.net/2013/11/george-christian-conversion/>.

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The move, which some believe is reflective of Bush's previously veiled religious views on the end of times, was criticized even by Jewish Zionist groups, which view such initiatives as openly antisemitic.<sup>53</sup>

From a teleological perspective, that is, from the perspective of effects and outcomes if not intent, Bush did the most as president to advance the armageddonists' great war, starting "endless," untracked warfare across over a dozen largely Muslim countries after the September 11 attacks.<sup>54</sup> It was neither a coincidence nor without political power that televangelists and public officials would characterize this violence as America at war with Satan himself via Islam and Muslims.<sup>55</sup> Bush was known for his certainty on this point: A former advisor to his father and Reagan, Bruce Bartlett, said, "Bush is so clear-eyed...about the Islamic fundamentalist enemy. He believes you have to kill them all...he truly believes he's on a mission from God."<sup>56</sup> Bush believed he acted in God's – and by extension Israel's – interests; indeed, Bush's invasion of Iraq, which he at one point termed a "crusade," was based in large part on Israeli intelligence allegedly proving the existence of weapons of mass destruction, which (then former) Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu testified about in Congress.<sup>57</sup>

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53. Abby Ohlheiser, "Bush's Jews for Jesus Speaking Gig Troubles His Pro-Israel Friends," *The Atlantic*, November 11, 2013, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/2013/11/george-w-bushs-jews-jesus-speaking-gig-disappoints-his-pro-israel-friends/355142>; Derstine, "George Bush Set to Speak to Christian End-Times Group;" Andrew Brown, "George W. Bush's New 'Crusade': Converting Jews to Christianity," *The Guardian*, November 14, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/andrewbrown/2013/nov/14/george-w-bush-speech-messianic-judaism>.

54. Bruce Riedel, "30 Years after Our 'Endless Wars' in the Middle East Began, Still No End in Sight," *Brookings*, July 27, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/30-years-after-our-endless-wars-in-the-middle-east-began-still-no-end-in-sight/>; International Crisis Group, "Overkill: Reforming the Legal Basis for the U.S. War on Terror," September 17, 2021, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/united-states/united-states/005-overkill-reforming-legal-basis-us-war-terror>.

55. See, for example, PBS, "General William Boykin: Words of Faith," October 21, 2003, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/general-william-boykin-words-of-faith>; BBC, "Top US Evangelist Targets Islam," March 14, 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4805952.stm>.

56. Suskind, "Faith, Certainty and the Presidency of George W. Bush."

57. The White House, "Remarks by the President Upon Arrival - The South Lawn," September 16, 2001, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html>; Robert Mackey, "Kerry Reminds Congress Netanyahu Advised U.S. to Invade Iraq," *The New York Times*, February 25, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/26/world/middleeast/kerry-reminds-congress-netanyahu-advised-us-to-invade-iraq.html>; Paul Waldman, "A Reminder About Netanyahu, Iraq, and Iran," *The American Prospect*, April 7, 2015, <https://prospect.org/world/reminder-netanyahu-iraq-iran/>; Ben Norton, "Netanyahu's Long History of Crying Wolf over Fake WMDs in Iran and Iraq," *The Real News Network*, May 7, 2018, <https://therealnews.com/netanyahus-long-history-of-crying-wolf-over-fake-wmds-in-iran-and-iraq>.

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That intelligence was later proven false, but proof would not have mattered.<sup>58</sup> As Barlett said, “[Bush] dispense[d] with people who confront him with inconvenient facts.”<sup>59</sup> Moreover, Christian Zionist leaders in this period had shifted their anti-Soviet prophecy to the “war on terror” as a religious war on Islam, echoing the language and general thrust of Bush’s speeches moralizing US warfare.<sup>60</sup>

Even as subsequent Democratic administrations would rally an anti-war American constituency to win elections, they were still subject to preexisting Christian Zionist influence combined with Jewish and secular Zionist advocacy on the political left.<sup>61</sup> Despite less religious adherence to a pro-war Christian Zionist agenda as Republicans, Democrats did not end the wars or stand in the way of Israel’s continued efforts to undermine Palestinian statehood, allowing the influence of Christian Zionist-friendly administrations to set sticky paths for future policy.<sup>62</sup> Under President Obama, the United States voted against even “observer status” for Palestine at the United Nations, one of just nine countries including Israel to do so.<sup>63</sup> And despite Netanyahu’s infamous speech before Congress to oppose Obama on a nuclear deal with Iran, Obama still approved the largest 10-year aid package to Israel to date: \$38 billion, a clear testament to the pro-Israel lobby’s power.<sup>64</sup> While Christian Zionist lobby groups failed to stop the Iran nuclear deal, their ally and right hand to Netanyahu, Israeli Ambassador Ron Dermer, secured Obama’s \$38 billion and was a regular speaker at Christian Zionist conferences. During this period, a new Christian Zionist organization was quickly taking up the mantle as the dominant Christian right advocacy group: Christians United for Israel, or CUFI, founded in 2006. Dermer spoke to CUFI on several occasions, defending Israeli massacres in Gaza in 2014 and seeking to rally

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58. Robert E. Kelley, “Twenty Years Ago in Iraq, Ignoring the Expert Weapons Inspectors Proved to Be a Fatal Mistake,” *SIPRI Essay*, March 9, 2023, <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/essay/2023/twenty-years-ago-iraq-ignoring-expert-weapons-inspectors-proved-be-fatal-mistake>.

59. Suskind, “Faith, Certainty and the Presidency of George W. Bush.”

60. The White House, “Remarks by the President Upon Arrival.”

61. William Roberts, “US Anti-War President’s New War Resolution,” *Al Jazeera*, February 19, 2015, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2015/2/19/us-anti-war-presidents-new-war-resolution>.

62. Ramzy Baroud, “Israel’s Friends at the RNC: ‘Christian Zionists’ Dictate the Agenda of the Republican Party,” *The Palestine Chronicle*, September 2, 2020, <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/israels-friends-at-the-rnc-christian-zionists-dictate-the-agenda-of-the-republican-party/>.

63. United Nations, “General Assembly Votes Overwhelmingly to Accord Palestine Non-Member Observer State Status,” Press Release GA/11317, November 29, 2012, <https://press.un.org/en/2012/ga11317.doc.htm>.

64. Matt Spetalnick, “U.S., Israel Sign \$38 Billion Military-Aid Package,” *Reuters*, September 15, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/us-israel-sign-38-billion-military-aid-package-idUSKCN11K2Cl>.

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the group's grassroots electoral base against any leader standing in the way of Israeli interests.<sup>65</sup>

Similarly, Biden's campaign narrowly defeated Donald Trump in 2020, even when far right-wing policies had caused over a million preventable deaths during the COVID-19 pandemic – a dynamic of preventable suffering relevant to political economy factors discussed below.<sup>66</sup> But Biden was never going to backtrack on Christian Zionist wins or warfare: Biden was a self-proclaimed Zionist who oversaw the genocide of tens of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza, with more Palestinians killed, displaced, injured, and imprisoned than in the 1948 Nakba.<sup>67</sup> To be sure, Christian Zionists continued to apply pressure during Biden's term. After Obama's election, the Christian Zionist group Faith and Freedom Coalition emerged. Led by Ralph Reed, a former leader of the Christian Coalition, the group deployed voter guides and mass mobilization efforts among millions of Christian voters during midterm elections under Biden.<sup>68</sup> It also announced \$62 million spent on voter turnout in the 2024 general election in favor of Trump, aiming to mobilize over seven million voters with traditionally lower turnout rates.<sup>69</sup>

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65. Alex Kane, "Israeli Ambassador Ron Dermer Gives Pro-war Pep Talk to Christian Zionists," *Mondoweiss*, July 11, 2014, <https://mondoweiss.net/2014/07/ambassador-christian-zionists/>.

66. Steffie Woolhandler and David U. Himmelstein, "Public Policy and Health in the Trump Era," *The Lancet* 397, no. 10275 (2021): 705–753; Philip Bump, "One Million Died. It Didn't Have to Happen," *The Washington Post*, May 9, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/05/09/million-american-covid-deaths-preventable/>.

67. Halah Ahmad, "The US Democratic Candidates on Racial Justice and Palestine: Divergence or Convergence?" *Al-Shabaka*, February 27, 2020, <https://al-shabaka.org/commentaries/the-us-democratic-candidates-on-racial-justice-and-palestine-divergence-or-convergence/>; Mohammed Salem and James Mackenzie, "Palestinians Mark 1948 Nakba in the Shadow of War in Gaza," *Reuters*, May 15, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/palestinians-mark-1948-nakba-shadow-war-gaza-2024-05-15/>; Ali Harb, "Biden's Legacy is Gaza Genocide, Palestinian Rights Advocates Say," *Al Jazeera*, July 22, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/7/22/bidens-legacy-is-gaza-genocide-palestinian-rights-advocates-say>.

68. CBN, "Faith & Freedom Coalition Invests \$40M in '2022 Project' to Get Christians in 24 States to Vote," September 26, 2022, <https://cbn.com/news/politics/faith-freedom-coalition-invests-40m-2022-project-get-christians-24-states-vote>; Alex Isenstadt, "Ralph Reed's Army Plans \$62 Million Spending Spree to Boost Evangelical Turnout," *Politico*, March 11, 2024, <https://www.politico.com/news/2024/03/11/ralph-reed-army-spending-trump-00146170>.

69. FEC records are unclear on the actual amount spent.

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Reports after his loss found that Biden never pushed Israel for a ceasefire even as the genocide hampered his already-low approval ratings.<sup>70</sup> That said, Obama's or Biden's Zionist bona fides were arguably more attributable to a weakened democratic system and the permeation of the broader Zionist pro-Israel lobby rather than the specifically Christian Zionist one. Yet Democrats failed to stop the advance of an armageddon agenda by Christian Zionist-friendly administrations, an intransigence that allowed the metaphorical "goal posts" to be set by those administrations and contribute to Bush's wars and Trump's unprecedented actions to erase Palestine and reverse de-escalatory agreements with Iran.

The weakening of US elections and the increased role of monied interests is a key site of right-wing Zionist influence as Zionist donors worked across the political spectrum toward the same aims. Among the more than one third of major donors (\$900,000+) to Biden's "Victory Fund" who are staunchly pro-Israel, virtually all of them are Jewish rather than Christian Zionist, but they formed part of the same war-mongering voices during Israel's genocide.<sup>71</sup> In other words, both Christian Zionist donors on the right and Jewish Zionist donors on the left aim to ensure continuous and unfettered aid to Israel, undermining both US and international law in the process. And while not all donations come with clear strings, many of these political donors openly used their access and influence to communicate opposition to any motion from the Biden administration criticizing Israel or threatening to reduce the scale of the weaponry the United States was providing.<sup>72</sup>

Similarly, those politicians receiving the most money from the pro-Israel lobby were most likely to support Israel's warfare in Gaza, according to analysis conducted by *The Guardian*.<sup>73</sup>

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70. "Israeli News Investigation Confirms Biden Administration Did Not Try to End Genocide in Gaza," *Democracy Now!*, May 1, 2025, [https://www.democracynow.org/2025/5/1/headlines/israeli\\_news\\_investigation\\_confirms\\_biden\\_administration\\_did\\_not\\_try\\_to\\_end\\_genocide\\_in\\_gaza](https://www.democracynow.org/2025/5/1/headlines/israeli_news_investigation_confirms_biden_administration_did_not_try_to_end_genocide_in_gaza).

71. Eli Clifton, "Biden's Gaza Policy Risks Re-Election But Pleases His Wealthiest Donors," *Responsible Statecraft*, May 16, 2024, <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/biden-gaza-2668270281/>.

72. Alex Thompson and Barak Ravid, "Biden's Big Donors Fume over Israel Criticism," *Axios*, May 10, 2024, <https://www.axios.com/2024/05/10/israel-gaza-biden-rafah-donors>.

73. Tom Perkins, "Revealed: Congress Backers of Gaza War Received Most from Pro-Israel Donors," *The Guardian*, January 10, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/jan/10/congress-member-pro-israel-donations-military-support>.

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Still, more of these major pro-Israel dollars go to the Republican Party, which also enjoyed the largest share of billionaire donors in the 2024 US presidential election with over 70% of billionaire donations.<sup>74</sup> Mega-donors Miriam Adelson, Paul Singer, the late Bernard Marcus (now succeeded by the Marcus Foundation), and Timothy Mellon have been key enablers of the Christian Zionist agenda, funding pro-Israel candidates including Trump, as well as such hawkish think tanks as the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies and Christian Zionist propagandist groups like the Philos Project and the Museum of the Bible.<sup>75</sup> Such political spending power has come to surpass the power of grassroots advocacy in many parts of the United States.<sup>76</sup>

### THE CHRISTIAN ZIONIIST WHITE HOUSE

Notwithstanding Obama or Biden's pro-Israel policies, the most Christian Zionist administration was Donald Trump's first administration – until his second. From Vice President Mike Pence, an ardent evangelical Christian Zionist, to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and white supremacist Steve Bannon as chief strategist, powerful placements of Christian Zionists led to an accelerationist policy of normalizing the rapid expansion of illegal Israeli settlements, moving the US embassy to Jerusalem, ending funding to the UN Relief and Works Agency serving Palestine refugees of 1948, targeting US-based activism for Palestine, and, of course, Trump's "Deal of the Century," which all but erased any notion of Palestinian self-determination or core demands.

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74. Arno Rosenfeld, "As Spending by Jewish PACs Soar, Two Billionaires Give GOP Group Major Fundraising Advantage," *The Forward*, November 7, 2024, <https://forward.com/news/669961/jdca-rjc-fundraising-2024-trump-harris/>. Regarding over \$230 million in pro-Israel, pro-Trump spending, see also Track AIPAC, "The Trump Administration," accessed December 1, 2025, <https://www.trackaipac.com/trump>; Americans for Tax Fairness, "Billionaires Buying Elections: They've Come to Collect," accessed December 1, 2025, <https://americansfortaxfairness.org/billionaires-buying-elections-theyve-come-to-collect/>.

75. Eli Clifton, "Home Depot Founder's Quiet \$10 Million Right-wing Investment," *Salon*, August 5, 2013, [https://www.salon.com/2013/08/05/home\\_depot\\_founders\\_quiet\\_10\\_million\\_right\\_wing\\_investment/](https://www.salon.com/2013/08/05/home_depot_founders_quiet_10_million_right_wing_investment/); Beth Reinhard et al., "How Billionaires Took over American Politics," *The Washington Post*, November 21, 2025. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/interactive/2025/billionaires-politics-money-influence/>.

76. OpenSecrets, "Outside Money, Inside Influence: How National Donors Shaped the 2024 Congressional Elections," accessed December 1, 2025, <https://www.opensecrets.org/news/reports/outside-money-inside-influence>. See also Reinhard, "How Billionaires Took over American Politics."

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As ambassador to Israel, Trump appointed David Friedman, who actively fundraised for illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied West Bank through US and Israeli nonprofit networks, working in close partnership with Christian Zionist groups.<sup>77</sup>

In turn, Israeli government leaders, now largely representing far-right political parties, dramatically accelerated construction of settlements, pursued the eviction of hundreds of Palestinians in Jerusalem, and increased demolitions of homes in Masafer Yatta and areas connecting Jerusalem to major West Bank settlements.<sup>78</sup>

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77. Walid Khalidi, "The Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism," Institute for Palestine Studies, December 14, 2016, <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1649378>; Center for Constitutional Rights, "David Friedman: Ambassador for Settlers," February 15, 2017, <https://ccrjustice.org/home/get-involved/tools-resources/fact-sheets-and-faqs/david-friedman-ambassador-settlers>; CUFI, "Mike Pence to CUFI: I Support Israel Because I Am a Christian," *Christians United for Israel*, July 8, 2017, <https://cufi.org/issue/mike-pence-to-cufi-i-support-israel-because-i-am-a-christian/>; Ali Abunimah, "The Zionist-White Supremacist Alliance in Trump's White House," *Electronic Intifada*, August 15, 2017, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/zionist-white-supremacist-alliance-trumps-white-house>; Hady Amr, "In One Move, Trump Eliminated US Funding for UNRWA and the US Role as Mideast Peacemaker," *Brookings Institution*, September 7, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/in-one-move-trump-eliminated-us-funding-for-unrwa-and-the-us-role-as-mideast-peacemaker/>; Felicia Schwartz and Courtney McBride, "Trump Administration to Say Israeli Settlements Aren't Illegal," *Wall Street Journal*, November 18, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-administration-to-say-israeli-settlements-arent-illegal-11574104691>; Rashid Khalidi, "No Deal: Why Trump's Plan for Palestine Will Only Create More Conflict," *The Guardian*, January 30, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/30/no-deal-why-trumps-plan-for-palestine-will-only-create-more-conflict>; Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, "'Deal of the Century': What Is It and Why Now?," February 4, 2020, <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/deal-of-the-century-what-is-it-and-why-now/>; Josef Federman, "Israel OKs Hundreds of Settlement Homes in Last-Minute Push," *PBS NewsHour*, January 17, 2021, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/israel-oks-hundreds-of-settlement-homes-in-last-minute-push>; Maayan Jaffe-Hoffman, "Mike Pompeo Named Top Christian Ally of Israel for 2023 - Exclusive," *Jerusalem Post*, September 29, 2023, <https://www.jpost.com/christianworld/article-760883>; Al Jazeera, "Who Are Israeli Settlers, and Why Do They Live on Palestinian Lands?," November 6, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/6/who-are-israeli-settlers-and-why-do-they-live-on-palestinian-lands>.

78. BBC, "Israel Approves Settlement Homes Following Trump Inauguration," January 22, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-38711701>; Zena Agha, "Israel's Annexation Crusade in Jerusalem: The Role of Ma'ale Adumim and the E1 Corridor," *Al-Shabaka*, March 26, 2018, <https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/israels-annexation-crusade-in-jerusalem-the-role-of-maale-adumim-and-the-e1-corridor/>; "Humanitarian Impact of Settlements in Palestinian Neighborhoods in East Jerusalem: Evictions and Displacements," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, June 5, 2018, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-impact-settlements-palestinian-neighbourhoods-east-jerusalem-evictions-and>; Alon Cohen and Maya Atidia, "Expert Report on Palestinian Villages in Masafer Yatta 1945-2020," February 2021, [https://www.btselem.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/202102\\_Bimkom\\_Expert\\_Report\\_on\\_Palestinian\\_Villages\\_in\\_Masafer\\_Yatta\\_1945\\_eng.pdf](https://www.btselem.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/202102_Bimkom_Expert_Report_on_Palestinian_Villages_in_Masafer_Yatta_1945_eng.pdf).

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These mass land grabs echo the events that gave early Zionist fervor to Christian evangelicals after Israeli seizure of the West Bank in 1967, which they believe signaled impending Israeli rule across historic Palestine and beyond – and thus the coming of Jesus and supposed biblical prophecy.<sup>79</sup>

**“This is the first time we’ve had connections with as many people in national government as we do now.”**  
– Pastor Doug Wilson, co-founder of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches, a Christian nationalist church to which Secretary Pete Hegseth belongs

In the current administration, the key Christian Zionist figures include Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Secretary of Defense (now War) Pete Hegseth, Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem, Secretary of Education Linda McMahon, Director of the Office of Management and Budget Russell Vought, US Homeland Security Advisor Stephen Miller, and US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee.<sup>80</sup> The overlap between white supremacists and Christian Zionists in the administration is prominent; Project 2025 and Project Esther, originating from the Heritage Foundation, both move to advance Christian Zionist views of the end of times and white supremacist visions to protect the privilege of white (and largely Protestant) Americans while suppressing pro-Palestinian advocacy.<sup>81</sup> Like Robertson’s role in the Bush campaign, it was the Heritage Foundation (whose lead author of its policy plans

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79. Ninan Koshy, "Christian Zionism," Global Ministries, December 22, 2014, [https://www.globalministries.org/mee\\_resources\\_christian\\_zionism\\_koshy](https://www.globalministries.org/mee_resources_christian_zionism_koshy).

80. Jacob Kornbluh, "What a Secretary of State Marco Rubio Would Mean for American Jews and Israel," *The Forward*, January 14, 2025, <https://forward.com/news/673807/marco-rubio-trump-state-israel-jews/>; Halah Ahmad, "How Anti-Palestinian Repression Is Building U.S. Authoritarianism," *American Muslims for Palestine*, July 30, 2025, <https://www.ampalestine.org/media/media-room/press-releases/new-amp-report-how-anti-palestinian-repression-building-us>; Michelle Boorstein, "Huckabee Pick as Israel Ambassador Reflects Long Evangelical Alliance," December 2, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2024/12/02/evangelicals-israel-trump-huckabee/>.

81. Myah Ward and Irie Sentner, "Trump's Pro-Palestinian Activism Crackdown Closely Mirrors a Plan from the Creators of Project 2025," April 6, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/04/06/project-2025-project-esther-university-crackdown-plans-0027275>; Tariq Kenney-Shawa, "Project Esther: Suppressing Palestinian Solidarity in the US," *Al-Shabaka*, April 15, 2025, <https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/project-esther-suppressing-palestinian-solidarity-in-the-us/>.

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was Vought) that prepared a list of thousands of figures to be placed in the Trump administration and bureaucratic jobs across federal agencies.<sup>82</sup> These leaders have created little distinction between Christian nationalism, led by the evangelical right, and Christian Zionism, also led by the evangelical right and many of the same figures. Secretary Hegseth has also started an optional prayer service for staff within the Department of War, in what some believe to be an explicit orientation toward both a Christian nationalist and armageddonist agenda.<sup>83</sup>

The overlap with Christian nationalism is not a coincidence; the same eschatology that results in Zionism on the Christian right also results in an agenda of Christianizing the country and removing the state from welfare and aid programs worldwide: A weaker welfare state means more generalized precarity, creating both the pretext for Jesus's return and the impetus for the public to turn to Church groups and faith. This is how the Christian nationalist and armageddonist agenda extends also to the Department of Health and Human Services, the office of the Attorney General, the Treasury, the Federal Communications Commissioner, and dominant voices on the Supreme Court, who voted to overturn women's rights and have hampered executive and corporate accountability through the court system.<sup>84</sup>

One of the most direct overlaps in pro-Israel strategy domestically concerns a weaponization of antisemitism to silence critique of the Israeli regime while also creating the precedent to suppress other forms of speech. While it is beyond the scope of this article to extrapolate all of the alignments with Christian nationalist, supremacist, and Zionist agendas

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82. Erich Wagner, "Conservative Think Tanks Are Preparing a List of 20K Potential Political Appointees in Hopes of Reviving Schedule F," *Government Executive*, April 24, 2023, <https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2023/04/conservative-think-tanks-are-preparing-list-20k-potential-political-appointees-hopes-reviving-schedule-f/385545/>; Faith Wardwell, "The Key Project 2025 Authors Now Staffing the Trump Administration," *NBC News*, March 12, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/trump-administration/key-project-2025-authors-now-staffing-trump-administration-rcna195107>. Notably, the Heritage Foundation also created a policy plan for Reagan, pushing for anti-Soviet policies.

83. Natasha Bertrand and Haley Britzky, "Hegseth Hosts First Meeting of What He Says Will Be a Monthly Christian Prayer Service at Pentagon," *CNN*, May 21, 2025, <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/05/21/politics/hegseth-pentagon-christian-prayer-service>.

84. For example, Clarence Thomas is famously patronized by Christian Zionist billionaire GOP donor Harlan Crow, alongside Trump appointees Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett.

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across these figures and agencies, many examples have been unearthed by such civil society and legal organizations as PalLegal, American Muslims for Palestine, Jewish Voice for Peace, the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights, Tamleh, and Al-Shabaka. Examples of the weaponization of antisemitism reveal its intent as a cudgel to discipline government agencies of all kinds into alignment with the Trump agenda – and to discipline pro-Palestinian Jewish organizations.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, the heads of the federal Task Force on Anti-Semitism are largely Christian Zionist figures and longtime pro-Israel advocates who helped inform the Project 2025 policy agenda. Similarly, Christian Zionist Victoria Coates was the lead author of Project Esther, the policy plan supposedly targeting antisemitism (but in fact criminalizing anti-Israel critique), alongside hawkish figures from the Israeli right like Daniel Flesch (who is also American).<sup>86</sup> Collaborations between the right-wing Israeli government and Christian Zionists in the United States signal a cynical strategy with widespread domestic and foreign consequences. Certainly some of the Christian Zionist right’s success in electing Donald Trump a second time is the failure of the Democratic establishment to rally voters in the 2024 election cycle, resulting in lower Democratic turnout in key states and cities.<sup>87</sup> Notably, according to polling data a significant portion of that voter apathy was due to or exacerbated by inaction to stop the genocide in Gaza.<sup>88</sup> Still, the Christian Zionist and broader pro-Israel lobby had also grown stronger and more emboldened under Trump’s first term and the resulting anti-democratic movement. The preeminent Zionist lobby, Christians United for Israel (CUFI) now boasts over 10 million members, roughly a quarter of the number of Christian evangelicals who believe that Israel and the Jewish people have a divine right to the land of Palestine (1 in 8 Americans).<sup>89</sup>

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85. Ahmad, “How Anti-Palestinian Repression is Building Authoritarian Precedent.”

86. "Project Esther: NYT Details Right-Wing Plan to 'Rebrand All Critics of Israel' as Hamas Supporters," *Democracy Now!*, May 19, 2025, [https://www.democracynow.org/2025/5/19/project\\_esther](https://www.democracynow.org/2025/5/19/project_esther).

87. Tessa Stuart, Asawin Suebsaeng, and Andrew Perez, “How the Democrats Blew It,” *Rolling Stone*, January 11, 2025, <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/campaign-2024-democrats-failure-1235230952/>; Catalist, “What Happened in 2024,” *Catalist LLC*, May 2025, <https://catalist.us/whathappened2024/>.

88. Halah Ahmad, “Depressing the Vote: Genocide and the 2024 US Presidential Race,” *Al-Shabaka*, February 25, 2025, <https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/depressing-the-vote-genocide-and-2024-us-presidential-race/>.

89. Alice Bach, “Inside the Christians United for Israel Summit in Washington, D.C.,” *Institute for Palestine Studies*, July 20, 2010, <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/42381>; Becka A. Alper, “Modest Warming in U.S. Views on Israel and Palestinians,” *Pew Research Center*, May 26, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/05/26/modest-warming-in-u-s-views-on-israel-and-palestinians/>.

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Yet perhaps more important than these numbers is the unchecked financial power of these groups, as – as indicated above – Zionist donors dominate electoral fundraising across both Democratic and Republican candidates.<sup>90</sup> This financial reality helps to explain not only Trump’s victory but also the failure of Democrats to differentiate themselves from Republicans on Israel even amid a livestreamed genocide in Gaza. Importantly, while many funders are not themselves Christians, the funding of Christian Zionist and Christian nationalist figures by Zionist mega-donors represents an attempt to extend Israel’s largest and most natural grassroots base – not Jewish communities, but Christian fundamentalists. This is evidenced as well in the widespread state-level passage of anti-BDS bills as well as antisemitism bills silencing critique of Israel; these often begin in states where Jewish populations are a small minority but Christian Zionists hold sway, like Alabama, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas.<sup>91</sup> Groups such as AIPAC have supported these efforts, empowering a Christian religious minority and its ideological kin.

The largest case study of such financial influence in US elections occurred in fact before the general election of 2024, when the pro-Israel lobby successfully ousted two of the most pro-Palestinian incumbent members of Congress.<sup>92</sup> Jamaal Bowman of New York and Cori Bush of Missouri were defeated in the most expensive primaries in history, with their opponents backed by pro-Israel political bodies and donors.<sup>93</sup>

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90. Philip Weiss, “The Arms Race Between Dems and GOP for Pro-Israel Donors,” June 1, 2020, <https://mondoweiss.net/2020/06/the-arms-race-between-dems-and-gop-for-pro-israel-donors/>; Corey Tusak, “AIPAC-backed Candidates Win Big in US Elections, Strengthening pro-Israel Presence in Congress,” *Jerusalem Post*, November 7, 2024, <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/article-828009>.

91. Human Rights Watch, “US: States Use Anti-Boycott Laws to Punish Responsible Businesses.” April 23, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/23/us-states-use-anti-boycott-laws-punish-responsible-businesses>; BillTrack50, “Executive Order - Similar Bills,” February 2, 2025, <https://www.billtrack50.com/executive-order/similar/78040>; World Population Review, “Jewish Population by State 2025,” n.d., <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/jewish-population-by-state>.

92. Geoffrey Skelley, “Pro-Israel Groups Spent Big to Oust Two Squad Members in Primaries,” *ABC News*, September 30, 2024, <https://abcnews.go.com/538/pro-israel-groups-spent-big-oust-squad-members/story?id=113675889>.

93. Ellie Kreidie, “A Deep Dive Into the Bowman Loss,” *Arab American Institute*, July 8, 2024, <https://www.aaiusa.org/library/a-deep-dive-into-the-bowman-loss>; Al Jazeera, “Cori Bush Loses Democratic Primary After Huge Campaign by pro-Israel Groups,” August 7, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/8/7/cori-bush-loses-democratic-primary-after-huge-campaign-by-pro-israel-groups>.

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In effect, the political advocacy groups AIPAC and Democratic Majority for Israel demonstrated that there was no price too high to pay to oust a popular Democratic incumbent candidate for another, pro-Israel one.<sup>94</sup> The Marcus Foundation and Miriam Adelson contributed millions to the United Democracy PAC, which also targeted those races. As major funders of Christian Zionist groups, their influence was a sign of the administration to come. Collectively, the lobby proved that they have the funds and fundraising power to win in multiple races in the same year. When Trump thereafter won the election, the strength of billionaire power over grassroots power was only more instantiated. When Trump thereafter won the election, the strength of billionaire power over grassroots power was only more instantiated.<sup>95</sup> Christian Zionists therefore have not only grassroots power and influential government placements; they also have what is perhaps the strongest form of electoral power on their side: billionaire influence over US elections. Since the Supreme Court ruled in favor of unfettered election spending in the 2010 Citizens United case, US elections have seen unprecedented fundraising for campaigns, and with it, the growing influence of the wealthiest individuals and corporations.<sup>96</sup>

### THE PARADOX OF CHRISTIAN ZIONIST POLITICAL ECONOMY

Yet there may be reason to expect the political-economic dynamics of the present to begin to weaken the Christian Zionist movement's power, at the very moment its agenda is most likely to be implemented both domestically and internationally. This is because most political movements are predicated on access to a benefit or privilege, dismantlement of an

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94. Ryan Grim, "A People-Powered Insurgency Threatened to Reshape the Democratic Party. Then Came AIPAC and Its Allied Super PAC, Democratic Majority for Israel," *The Intercept*, February 23, 2023, <https://theintercept.com/2022/10/16/democratic-party-progressive-israel-aipac-dmfi/>; Eli-Clifton, "AIPAC's New Political Strategy: Spend Millions on Elections Without Mentioning Israel," *Common Dreams*, April 12, 2024, <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2022/08/09/aipacs-new-political-strategy-spend-millions-elections-without-mentioning-israel>; OpenSecrets, "American Israel Public Affairs Cmte Profile: Summary," 2025, <https://www.opensecrets.org/orgs/american-israel-public-affairs-cmte/summary?id=D000046963>.

95. Zachary Tashman and William Rice, "Billionaires Buying Elections: They've Come to Collect," Americans for Tax Fairness, May 12, 2025, <https://americansfortaxfairness.org/billionaires-buying-elections-theyve-come-to-collect/>; Popular Democracy in Action, "Trump's Corporate Oligarchs: Billionaires Cash in While Working People Pay the Price," 2025, <https://populardemocracyinaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Trump-Corporate-Oligarchs.pdf>.

96. Ian Vandewalker, "Megadonors Playing Larger Role in Presidential Race, FEC Data Shows," Brennan Center for Justice, November 1, 2024., <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/megadonors-playing-larger-role-presidential-race-fec-data-shows>.

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acute injustice or disadvantage, or establishment of systems that benefit adherents in some way—much like religion promises paradise for good deeds and faith.<sup>97</sup> Christian Zionist philosophy is like this in some ways, as many evangelical Christians believe in the “rapture” and a “prosperity gospel” that suggests they will be blessed in worldly ways through faithfulness to the Bible and God’s will, including a belief that “blessing” Israel will likewise cause one to be blessed.<sup>98</sup> In addition, Christian Zionism and Jewish Zionism are both tied to racialized visions of a privileged colonial position or salvation that condemns a racialized other to displacement, violence, death, and systemic disadvantage.<sup>99</sup> But the Christian Zionist ideology is also paradoxical in that its benefit involves an intervening period of intense suffering, both personal and global, such that any benefit is deferred and may never be realized.<sup>100</sup> That is, Jesus’s return, according to dispensationalist eschatology, is contingent on mass warfare, hunger, and disease (according to Revelations). Those who work toward that outcome thereby work toward their own and others’ suffering, optimizing for a deferred reality at odds with one’s own interests – and certainly at odds with the interests of Jewish people in Palestine, who are expected to suffer immensely.

While it is true that pre-millennialists often believe they will be raptured before the ultimate period of tribulations, the signs of that period being imminent would be tantamount to signs of the coming rapture, and there is disagreement about whether the rapture comes before or after the tribulations.<sup>101</sup>

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97. See, for example, John Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves* (Routledge, 1998); Marshall Ganz, *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement* (Oxford University Press, 2009); David A. Snow and Sara E. Soule, “Mobilizing Grievances,” in *A Primer on Social Movements* (W.W. Norton, 2010), 24–58.

98. See, for example, this sermon on the rapture by Christians United For Israel President and Pastor John Hagee: <https://sermons.love/john-hagee/16212-john-hagee-the-revelation-of-the-rapture.html>.

99. Darryl Li, “On Law and Racial Capitalism in Palestine,” LPE Project, June 11, 2021, <https://lpeproject.org/blog/on-law-and-racial-capitalism-in-palestine/>.

100. Andra Watkins, “Christian Nationalists and the End of the World,” *For Such a Time as This* (blog), November 21, 2024, <https://andrawatkins.substack.com/p/christian-nationalists-and-the-end>.

101. Gleason L. Archer, Paul D. Feinberg, Stanley N. Gundry, Douglas J. Moo, and Richard R. Reiter, *Three Views on the Rapture* (Zondervan, 1996); Timothy P. Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel’s Best Friend* (Baker Academic, 2004), 149.

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Understanding this notion explains why adherents might rationalize some of the harmful policy moves of Project 2025, and why leaders would usher in a policy of deprivation. However, Vought, who identifies as a Christian nationalist, seems to ascribe primarily to exceptionalizing advantage (granting benefits to a much more limited set of largely white, Christian citizens), while other Christian Zionist leaders suggest wider suffering will lead people to a return to the Church.<sup>102</sup> This paradoxical dynamic is also why, in part, traditional tools of progressive grassroots organizing and messaging for political support of various policies do not hold among the Christian right.

The departure from this philosophy of suffering among some on the Christian right seeks to exceptionalize and protect a White Christian person from the suffering their ideology seeks to establish. Figures like Tucker Carlson, former conservative Fox News anchor and now independent journalist and YouTube streamer with over four million followers (and over 16 million on X); Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene, a far right MAGA figure who has become outspoken about ending “foreign wars;” and other conservative leaders who have recently departed from unconditional support for Israel all fall in a category of “America First” ideals with special condemnation for the persecution of Christians, though this occurs as part of broader persecution of Palestinian and Arab peoples.<sup>103</sup>

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102. Andra Watkins, "Christian Nationalists: Suffering Brings People to God," *For Such a Time as This* (blog), December 3, 2024, <https://andrawatkins.substack.com/p/christian-nationalists-suffering>. This post also cites a public official making this claim: “Rep. Mark Green Says Let Tennesseans Suffer,” *The Tennessee Holler*, uploaded 23 May 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2tOpPF9nVU>; Rena Steinzor, "The Man Behind the Trump Deregulatory Throne," *The Regulatory Review*, May 8, 2025, <https://www.theregreview.org/2025/05/08/steinzor-the-man-behind-the-trump-deregulatory-throne/>.

103. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, X post, May 1, 2024, <https://x.com/RepMTG/status/1785690629118251476?s=20>; Amanda Kadlec, “MAGA Zionism and Its Discontents,” *New Lines Magazine*, January 21, 2025, <https://newlinesmag.com/reportage/maga-zionism-and-its-discontents/>; Alison Main, Manu Raju, and Nicky Robertson, “Marjorie Taylor Greene Says Trump Voters Wanted ‘No More Foreign Wars’ and Iran Strikes Expose MAGA Divide,” *CNN*, June 23, 2025, <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/06/23/politics/marjorie-taylor-greene-iran-strikes-trump-maga-divide/>; “Is Israel Not Safe for Christians? Matt Gaetz Weighs in on Huckabee Warnings of Visa Backlash,” *One America News Network*, July 20, 2025, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMbCm\\_FGZII](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMbCm_FGZII); “Putin Won’t Stop Until Somebody Makes Him Stop, Says Sen. Lindsey Graham,” *Fox News*, July 21, 2025 <https://www.foxnews.com/video/6375894866112>; Abdullah Hayek, “The American Right is Falling Out of Love with Israel,” *The Hill*, July 30, 2025, <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/5425774-the-american-right-is-falling-out-of-love-with-israel/>; Tucker Carlson, X post, August 11, 2025, <https://x.com/TuckerCarlson/status/1954950949073559733?s=20>.

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Whereas these same impulses have been readily leveraged and amplified by pro-Israel groups to capitalize on Christian nationalist ideologies toward foreign warfare, an emergent conservative movement is breaking with the presumptive Zionist and armageddonist alignment.<sup>104</sup>

Polling of American Christians, particularly Protestants who are the largest adherents to Christian Zionism, suggests that there is significantly less support for Israel among younger generations.<sup>105</sup> This decrease in support even preceded the beginning of the genocide in Gaza in 2023 and has continued since, alongside broader trends in younger Americans' opposition to Israeli warfare.<sup>106</sup> But such decreases in evangelical fidelity to right-wing political figures has not yet resulted in a change in broader lobbying or power, suggesting the older generations have succeeded in allying with far right-wing groups to reduce the democratic safeguards that would allow mass movements to obstruct their minority views.<sup>107</sup> Still, older generations of Christian Zionists did not experience the effects of their political philosophies at the scale possible now – in which their leaders are actively removing public health safeguards, pursuing aggressive regional warfare amid a genocide, undermining international court orders, escalating climate disaster-prone technologies while removing climate regulation, weakening democratic systems, and redacting women's

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104. See, for example, Tucker Carlson's interview with the conservative pundit Nick Fuentes: "Tucker Carlson Interviews Nick Fuentes," uploaded October 27, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efBBOD4tf1Y>.

105. Jacob Magid, "Support for Israel among Young US Evangelical Christians Drops Sharply - Survey," *The Times of Israel*, May 21, 2021, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/support-for-israel-among-young-us-evangelicals-drops-sharply-survey/>; Alnaqib Saafya, "American Evangelicals' Unique Support for Israel," *Chicago Council on Global Affairs*, September 30, 2024, <https://globalaffairs.org/commentary-and-analysis/blogs/american-evangelicals-unique-support-israel>.

106. Laura Silver, "Younger Americans Stand Out in Their Views of the Israel-Hamas War," *Pew Research Center*, July 21, 2025, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/04/02/younger-americans-stand-out-in-their-views-of-the-israel-hamas-war/>.

107. Arit John, Dianne Gallagher, and Jaide Timm-Garcia, "Post-Evangelicals Shift away from Faith Tied to Republican Politics," *CNN*, September 7, 2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/09/07/politics/post-evangelicals-politics>; Maya Sen, "Why Federal Courts Are Unlikely to Save Democracy From Trump's and Musk's Attacks - Ash Center," *Ash Center*, February 12, 2025, <https://ash.harvard.edu/articles/why-federal-courts-are-unlikely-to-save-democracy-from-trumps-and-musks-attacks/>.

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rights, among other agendas of suffering and control.<sup>108</sup> It is yet to be seen whether such faithful adherence will hold for what is to come – but at least in the case of Biden, a major pandemic’s deadly toll was at least part of what spurred his initial win.<sup>109</sup>

### CONCLUSIONS

**“Americans – secular or religious – who find the dispensationalists’ nightmarish visions appalling have scarcely begun to grasp their pervasiveness, let alone consider how to combat them.”<sup>110</sup>**

–Dr. Paul Boyer

The resonance of Christian Zionism has expanded and contracted in the past 77+ years in the United States, but its electoral influence has mostly grown since the 1970s.

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108. Li Zhou, “Trump Wants a Big Expansion in Fossil Fuel Production. Can He Do That?” *Vox*, November 20, 2024, <https://www.vox.com/politics/386462/trump-fossil-fuels-gas-oil.v>; UN News, “ICC Issues Arrest Warrants for Netanyahu, Gallant and Hamas Commander,” November 23, 2024, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/11/1157286>; Lindsay Freeman, “Dear Congress: If You Value National Security, Do Not Sanction the ICC,” *Default*, *Lawfare*, December 11, 2024, <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/dear-congress--if-you-value-national-security--do-not-sanction-the-icc>; The White House, “Imposing Sanctions on the International Criminal Court,” February 10, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/imposing-sanctions-on-the-international-criminal-court/>; “RFK Jr to Tell CDC to End Fluoride Recommendation for Drinking Water,” *The Guardian*, April 8, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/07/rfk-jr-flouride-water>; “Statement Release: Doctors for America Calls for the Resignation or Removal of HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.,” *Doctors for America*, April 15, 2025, <https://doctorsforamerica.org/statement-release-rfk-resignation/>; Mary Kekatos, “RFK Jr. Removes All 17 Members of CDC’s Vaccine Advisory Committee,” *ABC News*, June 10, 2025, <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/rfk-jr-removing-17-members-cdcs-vaccine-advisory/story?id=122670046>; Dharna Noor and Oliver Milman, “Trump Bids to Scrap Almost All Pollution Regulations - Can Anything Stop This?,” *The Guardian*, July 31, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jul/31/trump-epa-endangerment-finding>; Madeline Halpert, “RFK Jr Cancels \$500m in mRNA Vaccine Development in the US,” August 6, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c74dzdddvmjo>; Katya Mendoza, “EPA Moves to Rescind Landmark Climate Rule, Threatening Net-zero Goals,” *PBS-NPR AZPM*, September 3, 2025, <https://news.azpm.org/s/101646-epa-moves-to-rescind-landmark-climate-rule-threatening-net-zero-goals/>. As an example of the resonance with Christian Zionist biblical prophecy and broader dispensationalism, see more on the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. As a general introduction, see *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse,” accessed December 3, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/four-horsemen-of-the-Apocalypse>.

109. Leonardo Baccini, Abel Brodeur, and Stephen Weymouth, “The COVID-19 Pandemic and the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election,” *Journal of Popular Economy*, 2021, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7809554/>.

110. Boyer, “Give Me that End-Time Religion.”

## How Christian Zionists Wield Electoral Power | ISCZ Vol. 1 No. 2

Its rise is a key case study in the ways extreme political groups more broadly have been able to gain power and change policy across the US population. However, the power has involved exceptionalizing advantage and disadvantage through the lens of end-of-times prophecies and generalized racism against a Satanic other – whether the Soviet Union and its proxies or Iran and other Middle Eastern governments.<sup>111</sup> The implications have been wars with a toll largely borne by dehumanized others and an emboldened and hawkish Israel. It follows that such policies would bolster right-wing, anti-democratic trends as they have, correlating with the dramatic increase in billionaire influence in US elections. Indeed, as the natural and largest partner to a Zionist agenda in the United States, the Christian right and Christian nationalism has been bankrolled heavily by Christian, Jewish, and secular Zionist billionaires alike, becoming a leading source of funding in US elections.

In effect, Christian Zionism has reshaped US politics, foreign policy, and democratic norms through a fusion of racial capitalism, Christian nationalism, and Zionist eschatology. Its paradoxical political economic value proposition – demanding suffering in service of deferred prophetic reward or rapture – has produced an electoral bloc and donor base with outsized power.<sup>112</sup> The electoral autocracy produced by right-wing and Christian Zionist organizing is most threatened—for now—by a stronger democracy that can evolve with evident generational shifts, the emergence of mass movements, and exposure of the underlying contradictions of the Christian right’s weaponization of their theology in service of an antisemitic vision of destruction.<sup>113</sup>

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111. See, for example, Ronald Reagan. “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida,” March 8, 1983, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-annual-convention-national-association-evangelicals-orlando-fl>; Paul Kengor, “Hot Words in the Cold War,” *Christian History Magazine*, 2008, accessed December 3, 2025, <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/hot-words-in-the-cold-war>; Yaakov Ariel, *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism* (Cambridge University Press, 2013); Sarah Posner, “The Evangelicals Who Pray for War With Iran,” *The New Republic*, May 11, 2021, <https://newrepublic.com/article/156166/pence-pompeo-evangelicals-war-iran-christian-zionism>; Brian Talbot, “Mike Huckabee’s Old-School Christian Zionism Is Bad News for Anyone Who Wants Middle East Peace,” *The Forward*, April 9, 2025, <https://forward.com/opinion/675457/mike-huckabee-christian-zionism-israel-evangelical/>.

112. For a look at subnational power held by the far right, see, for example, Jacob M. Grumbach, “Laboratories of Democratic Backsliding,” *American Political Science Review* 117, no. 3 (August 2023): 967–84.

113. “Electoral autocracy” is a term political scientists use to describe authoritarianism that has the perceived legitimacy of continued elections, but which are – or become – less free, fair, and open. It is the most common form of authoritarianism in the modern era. See, for example, Erica Chenoweth and Zoe Marks, “Pro-Democracy Organizing against Autocracy in the United States: A Strategic Assessment & Recommendations,” *Harvard Kennedy School Faculty Research Working Paper Series*, October 2022, <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/publications/pro-democracy-organizing-against-autocracy-united-states-strategic-assessment>.

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As such, intersectional resistance is pivotal to stop the broad-based suffering and violence that the movement presently bolsters, especially as progressively fewer people are insulated from the effects.

In recent years, as many Palestinian rights advocates have sought to wield unprecedented electoral and grassroots power across the political spectrum to stop the flow of weapons to Israel, and progressive groups seek to rally pro-Palestinian sentiment to secure major electoral victories, this analysis may provide a generative and sobering understanding of their opposition— and its paradoxical political economy.<sup>114</sup> Whether through counter-electoral efforts or organized disruption of monied interests, the scale of an oppositional movement must be larger and more ubiquitous to succeed.

**Halah Ahmad** is a policy researcher, writer, and strategist, as well as policy member of Al-Shabaka, The Palestinian Policy Network.

Acknowledgement: Nothing is ever singularly an individual accomplishment; all knowledge is in debt to previous knowledge-makers and scholars, and I am grateful for those who have written about the shrouded influence of Christian Zionists to date.

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114. Samer Badawi, "American Society Will Have to Divest from Israel Before Our Leaders," *+972 Magazine*, September 27, 2024, <https://www.972mag.com/palestine-movement-us-local-elections/>; Al Jazeera, "Mamdani's New York Victory Boosts Pro-Palestine Politics in US," June 26, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/6/26/mamdani-new-york-victory-boosts-pro-palestine-politics-in-us>.

# Actualizing America's Christian Zionist Agenda:



Image credit: File:President Trump Welcome the Prime Minister of Israel to the White House, 25 March 2019.jpg, Wikimedia Commons contributors, *Wikimedia Commons*.

## The New Apostolic Reformation

By Ben Lorber

On the clear afternoon of March 10, 2024, a small group of Jews and Christians gathered on a West Bank hilltop and readied themselves, with a pair of silver trumpets in hand, to renew an ancient Israelite wartime ritual. The Israelite priests blew trumpets like these to signal the people to gather and break camp, mark holy days, and go to war, one rabbi explained.

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And today – on Rosh Chodesh (the new moon) of the month of Adar on the Hebrew calendar – these trumpets, prepared to Biblical specifications, marked a holy war not only in Gaza but also against the Biden administration who, in renewing calls for a two-state solution in the months following October 7, 2023, had declared war against God's will.

The trumpet blasts that day may not have rent the heavens asunder, but the gathering was notable for the sheer volume of earthly political power concentrated on that hilltop. Apostle Mario Bramnick was a globe-trotting Christian Zionist operative with deep connections in the upper echelons of the Trump administration and the MAGA movement, head of the evangelical advocacy group Latino Coalition for Israel, and a leading figure in the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR), a fast-growing non-denominational charismatic movement fueling anti-democratic politics around the world. With Bramnick was Tony Perkins, President of Family Research Council, a flagship Christian nationalist group advancing decades of Capitol Hill lobbying against LGBTQ and reproductive rights, church-state separation, and other culture war crusades; and the leaders of Israel365, a Christian-focused Israeli hasbara outlet that broadcasts to millions of American evangelicals and had partnered with MAGA leaders like Steve Bannon and Charlie Kirk.

Bramnick was leading a solidarity delegation of US Christian leaders visiting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other Israeli leaders in the wake of October 7, but their reason for fitting the hilltop ritual into their packed schedule, he explained, was more selfish.<sup>1</sup> They were here, he declared in an opening prayer, “to repent on behalf of our nation...if we begin to curse Israel, [God's] hand of favor and protection [will] lift off of our nation...forgive us, Father, for our government trying to force the division of Your land.” A video of the gathering released on the MAGA platform Real America's Voice shows Yossi Dagan, head of the settlers' governing body Samaria Regional Council, lecturing on the security importance of Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank with a rifle strapped to his chest.<sup>2</sup>

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1. “We Must Stand up for Israel”: Latino Coalition for Israel,” *Charisma*, March 23, 2024, [mycharisma.com/news/we-must-stand-up-for-israel-latino-coalition-for-israel/](https://mycharisma.com/news/we-must-stand-up-for-israel-latino-coalition-for-israel/).

2. Israel365, “Renewing an Ancient Biblical Tradition,” April 18, 2024, [youtube.com/watch?v=pf-N9XZt-3c](https://youtube.com/watch?v=pf-N9XZt-3c).

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Before Jewish participants lifted the trumpets skyward in a series of shofar-like blasts, Perkins made sure to inscribe Christian power into the act as well. “With the trumpet, the authority was given to the [Israelite] priest to declare war, to assemble and to celebrate,” he explained, underscoring the theocratic bent of the Christian nationalist agenda. “We often look at the civil authorities as having that authority...[but] as evangelical leaders in the church, we have that authority to be here, and to make those declarations. It is not stepping into someone else’s authority, it is the authority that has been given [to us].”

One month later Bramnick and Perkins gathered again with the leaders of Israel365, this time at the Washington, DC offices of the Heritage Foundation, the flagship conservative think tank behind Project 2025. They were joined by over 150 American Jewish, Christian, and conservative leaders and organizations to launch a “Judeo-Christian” coalition called “Keep God’s Land,” organized to oppose the two-state solution. There were no silver trumpets at this “strategic gathering,” as one participant called it, but the drive for spiritual warfare remained.<sup>3</sup> “A two-state solution that divides God’s land,” the coalition stated, “would be a direct rejection of God’s will as clearly and repeatedly stated in the Bible.”<sup>4</sup> Sponsored by groups like Project 2025 and led by figures like Paula White-Cain, Trump’s longtime spiritual advisor and future head of the White House Faith Office, the afternoon featured recorded remarks from Benjamin Netanyahu and guests including House Speaker Mike Johnson, US senators, and Israeli Knesset members. The summit, like so much else unfolding in Heritage’s offices at the time, was positioning itself toward power.

Bramnick also co-chaired the Heritage Foundation’s National Task Force to Combat Antisemitism, and that October the Task Force published Project Esther, a comprehensive plan to repress the Palestine solidarity movement using heavy-handed tactics including lawfare, deportation, criminalization, surveillance, and more.<sup>5</sup>

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3. Erfan Fard, “The Blogs: Keep God’s Land Event: Ohad Tal, Scott & Tenney,” *The Times of Israel*, April 16, 2024, [blogs.timesofisrael.com/keep-gods-land-event-ohad-tal-scott-tenny/](https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/keep-gods-land-event-ohad-tal-scott-tenny/).

4. “Israel 365: Keep God’s Land: Christian/Jewish Leaders Gather in Washington to Join Forces against ‘Two-State Delusion,’” *Coalition for Jewish Values*, April 16, 2024, [coalitionforjewishvalues.org/2024/04/israel-365-keep-gods-land-christian-jewish-leaders-gather-in-washington-to-join-forces-against-two-state-delusion/](https://coalitionforjewishvalues.org/2024/04/israel-365-keep-gods-land-christian-jewish-leaders-gather-in-washington-to-join-forces-against-two-state-delusion/).

5. Ben Lorber, “Heritage Foundation’s Christian Nationalist ‘Project Esther’ Won’t Combat Antisemitism – But it Will Weaponize Jews,” *Religion Dispatches*, October 22, 2024, [religiondispatches.org/heritage-foundations-christian-nationalist-project-esther-wont-combat-antisemitism-but-it-will-weaponize-jews/](https://religiondispatches.org/heritage-foundations-christian-nationalist-project-esther-wont-combat-antisemitism-but-it-will-weaponize-jews/).

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“We know that a lot of the efforts of the task force that we launched are now being implemented by the Trump White House,” Bramnick celebrated on a prayer call with NAR leaders in February 2025, weeks before the administration would begin the kidnapping and attempted deportation of students like Mahmoud Khalil, the intimidation, defunding, and ideological capture of institutions like Columbia University, and more, all under the guise of “fighting antisemitism.”<sup>6</sup> The next month, Bramnick would return to Israel to launch the Conference of Christian Presidents, a new umbrella coalition uniting major US evangelical leaders to advance a shared pro-Israel policy agenda at the federal and state levels. The demand for West Bank annexation, which Bramnick had professed one year earlier on the West Bank hilltop, was at the top of the ticket. With the new administration, “God is giving Israel a blank check to begin to write upon, to dream again,” Bramnick declared.<sup>7</sup>

When mainstream media covers contemporary American Christian Zionism, they usually focus on frontline figures like US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee or Pastor John Hagee, head of Christians United for Israel, the largest Christian Zionist lobbying presence on Capitol Hill. Less attention is paid to operatives like Apostle Mario Bramnick, who helps facilitate relationship-building, faith-based diplomacy, and campaigning that actualizes the Christian Zionist policy agenda. Pastor of a small church in Florida, Bramnick possessed no government or policy experience before he rode the wave of feverish Christian nationalism during the first Trump administration to ascend the heights of what NAR calls the “government mountain.” Today, he interfaces regularly with world leaders to promote unconditional support for Israel in order to bring the Kingdom of God. His growing influence illustrates the dominionist, messianic agenda, and increasingly transnational and multiethnic character of Christian Zionism, a bedrock of today’s authoritarian and Christian nationalist upsurge.

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6. Well Versed, “WPN Call 421 | Israel - Pastor Mario Bramnick, Jim Garlow, Rabbi Pesach Wolicki & Byron Stinson,” February 13, 2025, [youtube.com/watch?v=MXOCRtP8qZA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MXOCRtP8qZA).

7. Maayan Hoffman, “‘God Is Giving Israel a Blank Check’: Pro-Israel Christian Leaders Form Coalition to Boost US Support for Israel,” *Ynetglobal*, March 20, 2025, [ynetnews.com/article/symkv3is1l](https://www.ynetnews.com/article/symkv3is1l).

### “A RED TSUNAMI OF THE BLOOD OF JESUS”

Bramnick serves as pastor of New Wine Ministries, a church of around 300 members outside Miami, Florida. A Cuban-American and lawyer by training, Bramnick does not appear to have spoken publicly about his early journey toward evangelical faith and leadership.<sup>8</sup>

Even before Donald Trump emerged as the GOP frontrunner in 2016, Bramnick was delivering dominionist prophecies that the next president “shall usher in the Third Great Awakening.”<sup>9</sup> At the time, Bramnick was head of the Hispanic Israel Leadership Coalition (HILC), an initiative within the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC, the largest Hispanic Christian organization in the country) that sought, in his words, to “build the Hispanic Evangelicals to be a firewall, a protection against this rise of antisemitism and anti-Israel rhetoric.”<sup>10</sup>

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8. Bramnick may have Jewish heritage. At least three pastors have referred to Bramnick's supposed Jewish heritage during interviews with Bramnick. In every case, Bramnick ignored the reference during the interview, neither confirming nor denying it. Many NAR leaders loudly advertise their Jewish heritage – dovetailing with the movement's embrace of Messianic Jews and a conversionary agenda – making Bramnick's seeming reticence notable. He may refrain from emphasizing his Jewish heritage, if it exists, to avoid alienating Jewish Zionist political partners, who are uncomfortable with Messianic Jewish identity and overwhelmingly reject any suspicion of conversionary intent. Lance Wallnau, “Lance's Pentecost Webinar with Mario Murillo, Robert Henderson, Jeremiah Johnson, and Mario Bramnick,” *Altensored*, May 31, 2020, [altensored.com/watch?v=ZlI5xDrZriU](https://altensored.com/watch?v=ZlI5xDrZriU); King of Kings Worship Center, “Kingdom Conversations: Mario Bramnick on Cultural Engagement,” July 28, 2020, [youtube.com/live/fZUXDGKPDIA](https://youtube.com/live/fZUXDGKPDIA); Georgian Banov, “Mario Bramnick: What Is the News Behind the News? (From the Shift 4/22),” *Rumble*, 2022, [rumble.com/v122vkk-mario-bramnick-what-is-the-news-behind-the-news-from-the-shift-422.html](https://rumble.com/v122vkk-mario-bramnick-what-is-the-news-behind-the-news-from-the-shift-422.html).

9. Peter Montgomery, “Prophets' Declare God Will Use Orlando to Put His Man in the White House,” *People For the American Way*, March 9, 2016, [peoplefor.org/rightwingwatch/post/prophets-declare-god-will-use-orlando-to-put-his-man-in-the-white-house](https://peoplefor.org/rightwingwatch/post/prophets-declare-god-will-use-orlando-to-put-his-man-in-the-white-house).

10. “With New Coalition, Israel Has Prominent Place on Hispanic Evangelical Agenda,” *The Jerusalem Post*, May 5, 2015, [jpost.com/christian-news/with-new-coalition-israel-has-prominent-place-on-hispanic-evangelical-agenda-402149](https://jpost.com/christian-news/with-new-coalition-israel-has-prominent-place-on-hispanic-evangelical-agenda-402149).

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By August, Bramnick had joined Trump's Hispanic Advisory Council. Charismatic and Pentecostal leaders, many of them NAR leaders, comprised Trump's earliest evangelical backers, and these leaders, with Bramnick among them, were granted unprecedented access to the president.<sup>11</sup> "President Trump was very open to the council of pastors, very open to the Holy Spirit, to the prophetic" on a range of domestic and foreign policy issues, Bramnick later told NAR Apostle Ché Ahn, claiming in another interview to have met with Trump and Vice President Mike Pence at least ten times during his first presidency.<sup>12</sup>

From the beginning, Bramnick and others helped the campaign understand the centrality of Israel for its evangelical base. They helped Trump's Israel advisers craft an agenda backing away from the two-state solution, which soon became enshrined in the GOP platform.<sup>13</sup> In 2017 Bramnick formed a new nonprofit, the Latino Coalition for Israel, in order to mobilize the US Hispanic community and Latin America "to form an intercessory" in support of Israel, as he told Charisma magazine.<sup>14</sup>

As special envoy for the Trump White House's Faith and Opportunity Initiative, Bramnick served as a mouthpiece for evangelical culture war causes ranging from "religious freedom" and anti-abortion initiatives to opposition to COVID-19 public health measures and more. He also served as a Latino surrogate for Trump's anti-immigrant agenda.<sup>15</sup>

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11. Matthew Taylor, *The Violent Take It By Force: The Christian Movement That Is Threatening Our Democracy* (Broadleaf Books, 2024), 92-97.

12. Ché Ahn Media ("CAM"), "Why Governments Need Prophets Now More Than Ever With Mario Bramnick," January 31, 2025, [youtube.com/watch?v=-B1NHtu469c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-B1NHtu469c); "Kingdom Conversations: Mario Bramnick on Cultural Engagement," July 8, 2020, [youtube.com/live/fZUXDGKpdIA](https://www.youtube.com/live/fZUXDGKpdIA).

13. Shalle' McDonald, "The Story Behind the GOP's Anti-Two State Platform," *Algemeiner.com*, July 14, 2016, [algemeiner.com/2016/07/14/the-story-behind-the-gops-anti-two-state-platform/](https://www.algemeiner.com/2016/07/14/the-story-behind-the-gops-anti-two-state-platform/).

14. Bob Eschliman, "New Hispanic Evangelical Group Shows Its Support for Israel," *Charisma*, August 5, 2025, [mycharisma.com/culture/new-hispanic-evangelical-group-shows-its-support-for-israel/](https://www.mycharisma.com/culture/new-hispanic-evangelical-group-shows-its-support-for-israel/).

15. For example, in 2016 Bramnick claimed that Trump possessed "tremendous understanding and concern for the undocumented immigrants." Peter Montgomery, "Trump Offers No Apologies for Rhetoric, but Some Conservative Latinos Warming to Him," *People For the American Way*, May 23, 2016, [peoplefor.org/rightwingwatch/post/trump-offers-no-apologies-for-rhetoric-but-some-conservative-latinos-warming-to-him](https://www.peoplefor.org/rightwingwatch/post/trump-offers-no-apologies-for-rhetoric-but-some-conservative-latinos-warming-to-him).

Bramnick gained influence in his home state of Florida, a conservative bastion, where he served on Governor Ron DeSantis' 25-member Faith and Community Advisory Council and held regular Nights to Honor Israel uniting Christian, American Jewish, and Israeli advocates.

After Trump lost the 2020 election, Bramnick joined NAR leaders like Apostle Jim Garlow to rally support for Trump's claims of election fraud. They helped organize global "election integrity" prayer calls on Zoom, frequented by leading election deniers like Steve Bannon and Michael Flynn. Over 1.1 million people either joined these live Zoom calls or viewed video recordings in the lead up to the Capitol insurrection, making them "one of the most important vectors for gathering Christians to oppose the legitimacy of the 2020 election," in the words of Matthew Taylor.<sup>16</sup>

### **"WE ARE HALF A BILLION PEOPLE IN LATIN AMERICA AND RISING"**

Bramnick's focus on Israel sets him apart from other Christian nationalist Trump surrogates. When Trump announced his decision to move the US embassy to Jerusalem in December 2017, Bramnick sprang into action. "There is a new open door in the spirit realm," Bramnick exclaimed, echoing popular evangelical enthusiasm. "There is a new wave of the Holy Spirit released over our nation and over our president as a result of this major bold move."<sup>17</sup>

The next month, Latino Coalition for Israel (LCI) sent 23 leaders to Guatemala to urge President Jimmy Morales to follow Trump's lead.<sup>18</sup> In various accounts of the trip, Bramnick claims that Morales, though an evangelical, had first decided against moving his country's embassy to Jerusalem. But in a call with Prime Minister Netanyahu to discuss the topic,

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16. Taylor, *The Violent Take It By Force*, 202-203.

17. "Evangelical Leaders: Jerusalem Declaration Released New Wave of Holy Spirit Over America," *Charisma*, January 9, 2018, [mycharisma.com/culture/evangelical-leaders-jerusalem-declaration-released-new-wave-of-holy-spirit-over-america/](https://mycharisma.com/culture/evangelical-leaders-jerusalem-declaration-released-new-wave-of-holy-spirit-over-america/)

18. Emilian García and Mónica Cordero, "Líderes Evangélicos Amparados Por La Casa Blanca Exportan Agenda Fundamentalista a América Latina," *El Clip*, September 18, 2020, [elclip.org/lideres-evangelicos-amparados-por-la-casa-blanca-exportan-agenda-fundamentalista-a-america-latina/?lang=en](https://elclip.org/lideres-evangelicos-amparados-por-la-casa-blanca-exportan-agenda-fundamentalista-a-america-latina/?lang=en).

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the connection was repeatedly interrupted, and during one of these lulls, a pastor present at Morales's side urged him to consider whether God was interrupting the call to send a message. Perhaps, the pastor intoned, God had ordained Morales for such a time as this, to make Guatemala a "sheep nation," ensuring God's blessing by supporting Israel. By the time the call resumed, Bramnick claimed, Morales had changed his mind, and Guatemala followed the United States in moving its embassy to Jerusalem in May 2018.<sup>19</sup> "From that night," Bramnick later told Ché Ahn, "the Lord spoke to me that he was going to send me to nations."<sup>20</sup>

Working with delegations through LCI and the White House Faith and Opportunity Initiative, Bramnick claims to have eventually met with as many as 10 right-wing heads of state in Latin America, including Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, and Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez.<sup>21</sup> These delegations brought together pastors and NAR leaders with heads of pro-Israel and Jewish community organizations from across the Western Hemisphere to lobby Latin American leaders to move their country's embassy to Jerusalem and deepen diplomatic relations with Israel, among other goals.<sup>22</sup>

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19. "The Crucial Need for Intercessors," Rumble, Intercessors for America, 2023, [rumble.com/v1tw6ha-the-crucial-need-for-intercessors](https://rumble.com/v1tw6ha-the-crucial-need-for-intercessors).

20. Ché Ahn Media ("CAM"), "Why Governments Need Prophets Now More Than Ever With Mario Bramnick."

21. Lauren Costantino, "How the Pastor of a Small Broward Church Became a Big Voice in Far-right Politics," *Miami Herald*, September 28, 2024, [miamiherald.com/news/local/community/broward/article292806034.html](https://miamiherald.com/news/local/community/broward/article292806034.html).

22. Sean Savage, "Jewish, Christian Leaders Visit Guatemala to Affirm Central American Nation's 'Courageous Act' on Jerusalem," *Jewish News Syndicate*, January 29, 2018, [jns.org/jewish-christian-leaders-visit-guatemala-to-affirm-central-american-nations-courageous-act-on-jerusalem/](https://jns.org/jewish-christian-leaders-visit-guatemala-to-affirm-central-american-nations-courageous-act-on-jerusalem/); "American Faith Leaders Meet and Pray With Brazilian President-elect," *Charisma*, December 21, 2018, [mycharisma.com/culture/american-faith-leaders-meet-and-pray-with-brazilian-president-elect-2/](https://mycharisma.com/culture/american-faith-leaders-meet-and-pray-with-brazilian-president-elect-2/); "Honduras Accelerates Agenda to Move Embassy to Jerusalem," *Charisma*, March 29, 2019, [mycharisma.com/culture/honduras-accelerates-agenda-to-move-embassy-to-jerusalem/](https://mycharisma.com/culture/honduras-accelerates-agenda-to-move-embassy-to-jerusalem/); "Latin American Task Force," Latino Coalition for Israel, [lci.global/latin-american-task-force/](https://lci.global/latin-american-task-force/).

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According to Bramnick, delegations would meet with Christian leaders as well as government officials in each country they visited, often using the former networks to secure connections to the latter. If the government leader is “Christian and understand[s] the spiritual field,” he recounted, “we speak to them in one way and if not, we talk to them about some of the issues most important to us.” In one visit to Brazil, Bramnick spoke at a megachurch celebration of the 70th anniversary of the creation of the state of Israel that effectively doubled as a campaign rally for soon-to-be President Jair Bolsonaro, two months before Brazil’s election.<sup>23</sup> This lobbying tour wasn’t Bramnick’s only foray into pro-Israel advocacy in Latin America. In 2016 and 2022, Bramnick co-organized the Global Forum for Combating Antisemitism in Buenos Aires. The summits, usually held in Jerusalem, united high-ranking Latin American government officials, Israeli leaders, and representatives from local Jewish communities and Israel advocacy organizations to strategize around the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism and passage of anti-BDS laws in countries across the region.

“We are half a billion people in Latin America and rising,” Bramnick said in an interview, speaking of the evangelical community. “We could be a tremendous force for support [of Israel] and a voice, impacting people, legislation, and governments.”<sup>24</sup> In 2017 Bramnick founded the Caribbean Israel Leadership Coalition, an LCI offshoot that engages in diplomacy and hasbara across Caribbean nations through business and tech partnerships with Israeli companies, economic development, disaster relief, public education initiatives, and more.<sup>25</sup>

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23. García and Cordero, “Líderes Evangélicos Amparados Por La Casa Blanca Exportan Agenda Fundamentalista a América Latina.”

24. Diego Melamed, “Global Meeting Against Anti-Semitism Meets in Buenos Aires,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, July 18, 2016, [jta.org/2016/07/18/global/global-meeting-against-anti-semitism-meets-in-buenos-aires](https://www.jta.org/2016/07/18/global/global-meeting-against-anti-semitism-meets-in-buenos-aires).

25. Eschliman, “New Hispanic Evangelical Group Shows Its Support for Israel.”

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In recent decades, with the rapid growth of Pentecostal and neo-charismatic forms of Christianity across Latin America, delegations like Bramnick's are becoming more common. NAR leaders in the United States often travel across the hemisphere to network and strategize with Latin American counterparts.<sup>26</sup> Charismatics celebrate church growth in the Global South as a sign of unfolding world revival and reformation – as well as increasing religious and political dominion. Israel's leaders are similarly eager to cultivate new governmental and political allies in regions like Latin America, which have long been supportive of the Palestinian cause. In the work of figures like Bramnick, all these interests converge. Bramnick's delegations also function as a strategic arm of “soft power” diplomacy for the Israeli and US right. This builds on an ignoble legacy of US and Israeli-backed repression. Especially in the 1970s and 1980s, the Israeli government provided crucial weaponry and strategic support (often as a de facto proxy for the United States) to brutal, dictatorial anti-communist regimes and insurgencies across Latin America, from Argentinian and Guatemalan military juntas to the Nicaraguan contras.<sup>27</sup>

For Bramnick, who immigrated with his family to the United States from communist Cuba as a child, the fight against progressivism in Latin America is personal, and like many evangelicals he preaches the gospel of free-market capitalism alongside conservative Christianity in the region. His diplomatic work helps strengthen the sinews of what scholars have called the “reactionary international,” the steady circulation of personnel, policy, and ideology between aligned autocratic regimes worldwide.<sup>28</sup>

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26. Jeff Abbott, “The New Apostolic Reformation is Expanding Its Seven Mountain Mandate Crusade into Latin America,” *Bucks County Beacon*, May 30, 2024, [buckscountybeacon.com/2024/05/the-new-apostolic-reformation-is-expanding-its-seven-mountain-mandate-crusade-into-latin-america/](https://buckscountybeacon.com/2024/05/the-new-apostolic-reformation-is-expanding-its-seven-mountain-mandate-crusade-into-latin-america/).

27. Nada Hussien, “Exporting Militarism: How Israeli Companies Market Repression in Latin America,” *War Resisters International*, November 14, 2019, [wri-irg.org/en/story/2019/exporting-militarism-how-israeli-companies-market-repression-latin-america](https://wri-irg.org/en/story/2019/exporting-militarism-how-israeli-companies-market-repression-latin-america).

28. For instance, see Nicolas Truong, “The Reactionary International: How Three Ideological Families Are United in Hating Progressivism,” *Le Monde*, April 13, 2025, [lemonde.fr/en/opinion/article/2025/04/13/the-reactionary-international-how-three-ideological-families-are-united-in-hating-progressivism\\_6740182\\_23.html](https://lemonde.fr/en/opinion/article/2025/04/13/the-reactionary-international-how-three-ideological-families-are-united-in-hating-progressivism_6740182_23.html).

But Bramnick's crusade in Latin America also flowed from his NAR visionary Christian Zionism.

### “FOR ZION'S SAKE”

The “New Apostolic Reformation” was a term coined by NAR leader C. Peter Wagner in the 1990s to describe a post-denominational pentecostal and charismatic church movement that rejects many historic church doctrines and structures, and emphasizes the modern-day restoration of early church offices such as apostles and prophets. NAR leaders approach political activism as a kind of millenarian crusade, charging followers to wage “spiritual warfare” to establish “dominion” over the “seven mountains” of societal power – government, religion, family, education, media, arts/entertainment, and business – a blueprint it calls the “Seven Mountain Mandate.”<sup>29</sup>

This represents a charismatic variant of the broader Christian nationalist agenda known in scholarly literature as “dominionism.” Researcher Frederick Clarkson defines dominionism as “the theocratic idea that regardless of theological camp, means, or timetable, God has called conservative Christians to exercise dominion over society by taking control of political and cultural institutions.”<sup>30</sup> Dominionism takes a variety of forms across the contemporary Christian nationalist movement, and the “Seven Mountains Mandate” remains influential well beyond the NAR. A 2024 survey showed that 41 percent of

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29. Frederick Clarkson and Ben Lorber, “The New Face of Christian Zionism,” *In These Times*, March 31, 2025, [inthesetimes.com/article/christian-zionism-evangelicals-right-wing-israel-palestine](https://inthesetimes.com/article/christian-zionism-evangelicals-right-wing-israel-palestine). For more on the NAR, see Taylor, *The Violent Take It By Force*.

30. Frederick Clarkson, “Dominionism Rising: A Theocratic Movement Hiding in Plain Sight,” *Political Research Associates*, August 18, 2016, <https://politicalresearch.org/2016/08/18/dominionism-rising-a-theocratic-movement-hiding-in-plain-sight>.

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self-identified American Christians agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “God wants Christians to stand atop the ‘7 mountains of society,’ including the government, education, media, and others.”<sup>31</sup>

With its rapid growth and outsized political influence, the NAR represents “one of the most important Christian religious and political movements of our time,” as Clarkson and André Gagné put it.<sup>32</sup> NAR leaders are embedded within the broader movement of global neo-charismatic and pentecostal Christianity, which encompasses well over 600 billion Christians today and will reach 1 billion, or 30% of the world’s Christian population, by 2050, according to a 2020 study.<sup>33</sup> Much of this growth is in the Global South, and large apostolic networks like Harvest International Ministry, led by Ché Ahn, claim to reach over 20,000 churches in 50 nations. The NAR is also shaping global Christian Zionism. For example, Dr. Jürgen Bühler, head of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, the largest global Christian Zionist organization, is a commissioned member of the International Coalition of Apostolic Leaders, a central network within the NAR.<sup>34</sup> Like many NAR leaders, Bramnick credits divine revelation for calling him toward Israel advocacy. “We were pastoring,” Bramnick explained in a 2025 interview with Ché Ahn, “and we began to receive years ago, words that we would get involved for Zion’s sake, involved with helping nations with Israel and God’s end time plan for Israel.”<sup>35</sup>

Bramnick regularly cites Genesis 12:3, the core charismatic Christian Zionist proof text, saying in one interview that “the Bible says that whoever blesses Israel will be blessed and

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31. Paul A. Djupe, “Belief in the 7 Mountain Mandate Appears to Be Growing in the Last Year,” *Religion in Public*, May 13, 2024, [religioninpublic.blog/2024/05/13/belief-in-the-7-mountain-mandate-appears-to-be-growing-in-the-last-year/](https://religioninpublic.blog/2024/05/13/belief-in-the-7-mountain-mandate-appears-to-be-growing-in-the-last-year/).

32. Frederick Clarkson and André Gagné, “A Reporter’s Guide to the New Apostolic Reformation [Revised for 2025],” *Religion Dispatches*, May 23, 2024, [religiondispatches.org/a-reporters-guide-to-the-new-apostolic-reformation/](https://religiondispatches.org/a-reporters-guide-to-the-new-apostolic-reformation/).

33. Todd M. Johnson, *Introducing Spirit-Empowered Christianity: The Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Movement in the 21st Century* (The Center for Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell, 2020).

34. “Israel – International Coalition of Apostolic Leaders,” September 11, 2025, [icaleaders.com/israel](https://icaleaders.com/israel).

35. Ché Ahn Media (“CAM”), “Why Governments Need Prophets Now More Than Ever With Mario Bramnick.”

whoever curses Israel will be cursed, and we read the Bible literally.”<sup>36</sup>

Elsewhere Bramnick has emphasized end-times beliefs. “God is calling the Jewish people back home,” he told Apostle Lance Wallnau in 2022. “It’s the regathering...eschatologically, before the coming of the Lord.”<sup>37</sup> He regularly evokes a “clash of civilizations” narrative against the enemies of the “Judeo-Christian” West. “Antisemitism is not just anti-Jewish. It is anti-Christian, anti-Western values, anti-Judeo-Christian values,” he declared in 2022. “We have similar enemies.”<sup>38</sup>

These core Christian Zionist themes are inflected with his particular brand of NAR dominionism.<sup>39</sup> Contrary to some Christian doctrines that advocate a spiritual retreat from a “profane” political realm, the NAR views political activism as vital for building God’s kingdom in the here and now. “Nations exist to bring glory to God, to establish his kingdom, to bless Israel, and to prepare for the return of the Lord,” Bramnick explained in July 2025, encapsulating this view. “Nations that uphold godliness and bless Israel are positioned for blessing.”

In this view, the political realm is not an end in itself but rather terrain to be captured for Christian dominion. “We get involved in politics, but it’s not about politics,” he explained:

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36. García and Cordero, “Líderes Evangélicos Amparados Por La Casa Blanca Exportan Agenda Fundamentalista a América Latina.”

37. Lance Wallnau, “How Trump Catapulted a Local Pastor Into a GLOBAL Ambassador,” *Rumble*, 2022, [rumble.com/v1c6nsb-how-trump-catapulted-a-local-pastor-into-a-global-ambassador-lance-wallnau](https://rumble.com/v1c6nsb-how-trump-catapulted-a-local-pastor-into-a-global-ambassador-lance-wallnau).

38. Mike Wagenheim, “Pro-Israel Entities in Latin America Work to Battle Anti-Semitism, Promote Co-existence,” *Jewish News Syndicate*, July 22, 2022, [jns.org/pro-israel-entities-in-latin-america-work-to-battle-anti-semitism-promote-co-existence/](https://jns.org/pro-israel-entities-in-latin-america-work-to-battle-anti-semitism-promote-co-existence/).

39. Bramnick’s connections to the New Apostolic Reformation are extensive. He is a member of the Apostolic Council of Prophetic Elders, a central network of NAR leaders. The board of LCI is stacked with leading lights of NAR including Lance Wallnau and Cindy Jacobs. “Statement from the Apostolic Council of Prophetic Elders Concerning a False Prophetic Word Targeting President Donald Trump,” November 16, 2024, [web.archive.org/web/20241126025324/static1.squarespace.com/static/5de934e41f089861d8539e7a/t/673920ef00069a5ddc7d5c2d/1731797232138/ACPE-Statement-False-Prophetic-Words-Over-Trump-and-America-Nov-2024.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20241126025324/static1.squarespace.com/static/5de934e41f089861d8539e7a/t/673920ef00069a5ddc7d5c2d/1731797232138/ACPE-Statement-False-Prophetic-Words-Over-Trump-and-America-Nov-2024.pdf); “Our Leadership,” Latino Coalition for Israel, <https://lci.global/leadership/>.

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It's about the church. The increase of His government is on us. We are the movers and shakers. We establish atmosphere over nations. God is calling apostles and prophets to arise over their nation and to take back that which the enemy has stolen. You're the compass. You're the rudder. You have an authority.<sup>40</sup>

In work with nations, as Bramnick puts it, "Israel is key." Drawing from Matthew 25:31-40, the NAR distinguishes between "sheep nations" – which enact strong pro-Israel and Christian right policies and will be judged favorably by God in the end times, which are already underway – and "goat nations," which fail to sufficiently bless Israel and will be punished. A sheep nation, claimed Lance Wallnau in 2022, "protects or keeps malicious forces from devouring the Christian and Jewish people," but a goat nation "has failed to show mercy."<sup>41</sup>

The NAR believes this theo-political activism catalyzes, and is catalyzed by, religious revival among Christian believers. "There is a window open for revival in Latin America," Bramnick declared in 2018, "as Latin American nations align with Israel to become sheep nations."<sup>42</sup> In the NAR worldview, lobbying for Israel is literally battling to save a nation's soul while countering BDS is binding Satan, and both unfold against a backdrop of imminent end times revival.

Bramnick instructs activists to identify "apostles and prophets and intercessors for the government mountain" within any given nation. In NAR parlance, apostles (like Bramnick) are generals and institution builders who guide movement strategy and direction; establish, govern, and mobilize church networks toward the "Seven Mountain Mandate;" and often

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40. RCPNation, "The Strongman Over Florida - Intercessors Training With Mario Bramnick and Dina Ramos," August 31, 2025, [youtube.com/watch?v=JHP32cOfg4g](https://youtube.com/watch?v=JHP32cOfg4g).

41. Clarkson and Gagné, "A Reporter's Guide to the New Apostolic Reformation.

42. "Prophetic Word of the Lord for 2018," 7M Underground, March 22, 2018, [7mu.com/blog/prophetic-word-of-the-lord-for-2018/](https://7mu.com/blog/prophetic-word-of-the-lord-for-2018/).

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interface directly with governmental leaders. God is said to speak directly to and through his prophets, providing direction to political intervention; informing the strategic decisions of apostles; and occasionally advising government leaders themselves.

Intercessors, finally, engage in “spiritual warfare” through the crucial weapon of prayer. At the direction of apostles and prophets (who are sometimes intercessors themselves), they conduct global prayer and fasting mobilizations and hold 24/7 watches as well as in-person rallies, designed to support prophets and apostles by binding and defeating demonic forces that, in their view, hold material sway over entire nations, geographic regions, political opponents, and even government buildings (such as the US Capitol on January 6, for example). These roles complement one another in NAR pro-Israel activism. For example, Bramnick brought apostles and prophets into lobbying meetings with Latin American legislators. During the same period, NAR leaders like Apostles Cindy Jacobs and Dutch Sheets organized intercessory prayer events supporting the US embassy move to Jerusalem.

Bramnick often urges NAR leaders to identify Daniels, Josephs, Esthers, Jeremiahs, and Cyruses within any given nation. These archetypes from the Hebrew Bible offer models for steadfast, prophetic, and strategic Christian Zionist and dominionist activism. But only the fifth, notably, represents a non-Jewish Biblical character. In the Hebrew Bible, the Persian king Cyrus allowed the Jewish people to return to the Land of Israel from their Babylonian exile and rebuild the Second Temple. During the 2016 election, Lance Wallnau claimed that Trump was a modern-day Cyrus, placed in power by God to serve as a vehicle for the divine process, even though Trump himself was unaware and largely irreligious.

After 2016, Trump-as-Cyrus became a viral meme across the charismatic world. Like many other NAR leaders, Bramnick frequently identified Trump as Cyrus, and in 2018, as he set his sights on Latin American leaders, he extended the metaphor, declaring that

“God is raising Cyruses over nations to transform nations into sheep nations.”<sup>43</sup> Wallnau would go on to credit Bramnick with expanding the Cyrus model – and Wallnau’s related concept, the Seven Mountain Mandate – into a full-fledged paradigm for kingdom transformation.<sup>44</sup> “The Cyrus model gave us the grid,” Bramnick explained to Ché Ahn in 2025. “President Trump was a prototype of what God wanted to do for nations.”<sup>45</sup>

Thus for the NAR, Israel is the hinge in global Christian nationalist revival.<sup>46</sup> The unfolding messianic process in Israel – exemplified by touchstones like the expansion of state sovereignty to embrace Biblical borders, deepening war against Palestinians and regional enemies, and the hoped-for establishment of a Third Temple and eventual Christianization of Israeli Jewry – is key to unlocking the global Kingdom of God. But the key cannot turn without the complementary cultivation of strong pro-Israel, Christian nationalist regimes around the world. As much as West Bank settlers, then, NAR activists place themselves in the vanguard of the end times process as they lobby and pray for their legislators to adopt anti-BDS laws, provide diplomatic and military aid to Israel, or anything else.

Like many NAR leaders, Bramnick has also expressed a missionary component to Christian Zionism. In a 2013 speech at a fundraiser for the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, Bramnick yearned for a spiritual “awakening of the Jewish people” and “revival in the land” of Israel. While some Christian leaders are careful to express this in circumspect terms – referring, plausibly at least, only to Jewish spiritual revival – Bramnick went further. Comparing Jewish souls to “fertile soil,” Bramnick seemed to commend the ICEJ for preparing the ground for missionary work in Israel, claiming the organization has “plowed and pushed the way so that you and I can embrace our Jewish brethren and tell them about

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43. “Prophetic Word of the Lord for 2018,” 7M Underground.

44. Wallnau, “How Trump Catapulted a Local Pastor Into a GLOBAL Ambassador.”

45. Ché Ahn Media (“CAM”), “Why Governments Need Prophets Now More Than Ever With Mario Bramnick.”

46. Due to its global nature, scholars like Frederick Clarkson and André Gagné have convincingly argued that the NAR should not be described as Christian nationalist at all, or at least in a carefully defined way. I use the term here as a familiar shorthand, noting this likely inadequacy. Clarkson and Gagné, “A Reporter’s Guide to the New Apostolic Reformation.”

the love of Messiah and the day that we're living in.”<sup>47</sup>

Over the years Bramnick has partnered with NAR leaders who focus heavily on Jewish proselytization, including Messianic Jewish activist Paul Wilbur. Recently, Bramnick again expressed seeming hope for Jewish belief in Jesus. “I think that Holy Spirit is breaking us out of our box,” he told a group of Florida intercessors in July 2025, advising activists to dream big. “What if Holy Spirit begins to move with signs, wonders, and miracles in the Vatican?...What if God wants to move amongst Jewish people, or wherever? So do not define or box Holy Spirit in this day.”<sup>48</sup> When Israeli and Jewish Zionists navigate partnership with Christian Zionists, they often draw a firm line against those who attempt or encourage proselytization. This includes groups Bramnick has worked with, such as Israel365.

Since 2017, Bramnick has trained other NAR activists in his model for dominionist political activity, running periodic workshops alongside NAR leaders like Cindy Jacobs. Seeking to institutionalize this model, Bramnick recently began to serve as Chancellor in Latin America for Wagner University, a non-accredited, non-traditional seminary started by NAR founder C. Peter Wagner that functions as a training institute to equip leaders in Seven Mountain activism.<sup>49</sup>

### **“GOD WANTS YOU TO WIN, AND WIN BIG”**

During the Biden presidency, Bramnick continued deepening collaboration with Israeli Right, American Jewish, and Christian leaders, organizing delegations and conferences in

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47. Mark Williams, “Pastor Mario Bramnick at the ICEJ Conference 2013,” May 16, 2013, [youtube.com/watch?v=sgf3QdsuEC8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sgf3QdsuEC8).

48. RCPNation, “American-Israel Relationship with Pastor Mario Bramnick and Apostle Dina Ramos,” July 21, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIEXx5s3p9k&t=421s>.

49. Ché Ahn Media (“CAM”), “Why Governments Need Prophets Now More Than Ever With Mario Bramnick.”

Latin America, and engaging in Christian nationalist advocacy.<sup>50</sup> This work was turbocharged after October 7, when the pro-Israel ecosystem rapidly pivoted to rallying behind Israel's war on Gaza and calling for repression against its critics.

Over the years Bramnick has partnered with NAR leaders who focus heavily on Jewish proselytization, including Messianic Jewish activist Paul Wilbur. Recently, Bramnick again expressed seeming hope for Jewish belief in Jesus. "I think that Holy Spirit is breaking us out of our box," he told a group of Florida intercessors in July 2025, advising activists to dream big. "What if Holy Spirit begins to move with signs, wonders, and miracles in the Vatican?...What if God wants to move amongst Jewish people, or wherever? So do not define or box Holy Spirit in this day."<sup>48</sup> When Israeli and Jewish Zionists navigate partnership with Christian Zionists, they often draw a firm line against those who attempt or encourage proselytization. This includes groups Bramnick has worked with, such as Israel365.

In 2024, Bramnick's leadership of the Heritage Foundation's Antisemitism Task Force and the Conference of Christian Presidents reflected this increased coordination and pivot toward power.

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50. During a 2023 delegation to Guatemala with NAR leaders including Bramnick, Ché Ahn, Lance Wallnau, and Cindy Jacobs, NAR apostles blew shofars in Congress and danced the hora outside Congressional halls. During the trip, they met with members of Guatemala's constitutional court and claimed to meet with the country's president. Their use of religious ritual in Congress provoked outcry from Guatemalan political analysts. Kyle Mantyla, "Mario Bramnick Calls on God to 'Shake the Senate' to Prevent Democrats From Enacting Their Agenda," People For the American Way, April 23, 2021, [peoplefor.org/rightwingwatch/post/mario-bramnick-calls-on-god-to-shake-the-senate-to-prevent-democrats-from-enacting-their-agenda](https://peoplefor.org/rightwingwatch/post/mario-bramnick-calls-on-god-to-shake-the-senate-to-prevent-democrats-from-enacting-their-agenda); Barney Breen-Portnoy, "In Latin America Outreach Push, CAM Attends Annual 'Conferência Global' in Brazil," Combat Antisemitism Movement, February 17, 2023, [combatantisemitism.org/cam-news/in-latin-america-outreach-push-cam-attends-annual-conferencia-global-in-brazil/](https://combatantisemitism.org/cam-news/in-latin-america-outreach-push-cam-attends-annual-conferencia-global-in-brazil/); Sharon Bender, "Celebration Night for Israel," B'nai B'rith International, February 24, 2023, [bnaibrith.org/celebration-night-for-israel/](https://bnaibrith.org/celebration-night-for-israel/); Mario Antonio Sandoval, "El Congreso No Es Un Templo Religioso," Prensa Libre, March 10, 2023, [prensalibre.com/opinion/columnasdiarias/el-congreso-no-es-un-templo-religioso/](https://prensalibre.com/opinion/columnasdiarias/el-congreso-no-es-un-templo-religioso/).

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In the leadup to the 2024 election, he rallied the crowd at Lance Wallnau's Courage Tour, a series of political roadshow events in key swing states that mobilized voters, election workers, and poll watchers. "It's time to join General Lance Wallnau in this great army to take back America!," declared Bramnick at one event, reflecting the militant tone.<sup>51</sup>

In the first months of the second Trump administration, Bramnick was back operating at the heights of power. He was among a group of evangelical leaders who held a closed-door meeting with Netanyahu during the Israeli prime minister's first visit to the United States in the new Trump administration – a visit during which Netanyahu notably did not meet with American Jewish leaders. He has also attended meetings of evangelical leaders with President Trump.<sup>52</sup>

In August, Bramnick met with US Attorney General Pam Bondi and Leo Terrell, head of the Department of Justice's Task Force to Combat Antisemitism.<sup>53</sup> Both figures play leading roles in the Trump administration's ongoing efforts to suppress Palestinian rights advocates in the name of fighting antisemitism, often by implementing policies found in Project Esther, published by Bramnick's Heritage Task Force. Amidst growing criticism of Israel within the MAGA movement, Bramnick co-organized a meeting for evangelicals to strategize against this threat and attended a closed-door session organized by Mike

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51. Frederick Clarkson, "Where's Wallnau? A NAR Apostle Takes Aim at Swing Counties in 'The Battle for the Mountain of Government,'" *Religion Dispatches*, May 10, 2024, [religiondispatches.org/wheres-wallnau-a-nar-apostle-takes-aim-at-swing-counties-in-the-battle-for-the-mountain-of-government/](https://religiondispatches.org/wheres-wallnau-a-nar-apostle-takes-aim-at-swing-counties-in-the-battle-for-the-mountain-of-government/).

52. Chris Mitchell, "Latino US Pastor Recalls Impressions of Historic Netanyahu Week in Washington," *CBN*, February 7, 2025, [cbn.com/news/israel/latino-us-pastor-recalls-impressions-historic-netanyahu-week-washington](https://cbn.com/news/israel/latino-us-pastor-recalls-impressions-historic-netanyahu-week-washington).

53. Leo Terrell (@LeoTerrellDOJ), "Incredible meeting today with Pastor Mario Bramnick, co-chairman and founder of Conference of Christian Presidents for Israel," X post, August 6, 2025, [x.com/LeoTerrellDOJ/status/1953145495557423438](https://x.com/LeoTerrellDOJ/status/1953145495557423438); Mario Bramnick (@bramnick\_mario), "It was an honor meeting with Attorney General Pam Bondi. She is doing a tremendous job as Attorney General," X post, August 13, 2025, [x.com/bramnick\\_mario/status/1955672827442724866](https://x.com/bramnick_mario/status/1955672827442724866).

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Johnson to limit the influence of Israel-critical GOP candidates in the 2026 midterms.<sup>54</sup>

Bramnick believes the second Trump presidency affords a rare, divinely-ordained window of opportunity to actualize a messianic agenda. “Trump's election is an international reset,” he declared in July 2025, “to dismantle the antichrist globalist agenda and establish a pro-Judeo Christian, pro-democratic conservative faith and family agenda, the establishment of sheep nations. We are in a new era of the realignment of nations.”<sup>55</sup>

Bramnick has updated the Trump-as-Cyrus model to fit a new era. If “Trump 45 was a modern Cyrus,” marking “the beginning of the restoration process,” then Trump has now taken on a “new mantle” of Darius, a “finishing anointing.”<sup>56</sup> In his reading of Biblical chronology, Cyrus's death in 530 BCE began a period of prophetic backsliding until 522, when the new king Darius took the Persian throne, re-authorized Ezra and Nehemiah to finish rebuilding the Temple, and inaugurated a new era of divine advance.

The Darius era opens a new window to further Israeli dominance. “For the first time since the Six Day War, the IDF is beyond enemy lines in Gaza, southern Lebanon and Syria, supernaturally,” Bramnick marveled in a speech at the Jerusalem Prayer Breakfast in January 2025, held at Mar-A-Lago. Two months later in Jerusalem amidst meetings with Israeli leaders was when he reaffirmed that “God is giving Israel a blank check to begin to write upon, to dream again.”<sup>57</sup>

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54. Gabby Deutch, “Trump-aligned Evangelicals Push Republicans to Call Out Antisemitism on the Right,” *Jewish Insider*, August 13, 2025, [jewishinsider.com/2025/08/trump-evangelicals-republicans-antisemitism-far-right/](https://jewishinsider.com/2025/08/trump-evangelicals-republicans-antisemitism-far-right/); Marc Rod, “Johnson Discusses Efforts to Push Back on GOP Isolationists with Pro-Israel Leaders,” *Jewish Insider*, September 17, 2025, [jewishinsider.com/2025/09/mike-johnson-gop-isolationists-pro-israel-leaders/](https://jewishinsider.com/2025/09/mike-johnson-gop-isolationists-pro-israel-leaders/).

55. RCPNation, “The Strongman Over Florida.”

56. Jerusalem Prayer Breakfast Global, “JPB Trump's Mar a Lago 2025 Inaugural Lunch Mario Bramnick,” February 5, 2025, [youtube.com/watch?v=G4m3CSEpWpY](https://youtube.com/watch?v=G4m3CSEpWpY); Carolina Lumetta, “Prophetic Foreign Policy,” *WORLD*, August 14, 2025, [wng.org/articles/prophetic-foreign-policy-1754441335](https://wng.org/articles/prophetic-foreign-policy-1754441335).

57. Hoffman, “God Is Giving Israel a Blank Check.”

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This Darius era also marks a new opportunity for global Christian nationalism. It is “a time of global revival and reformation with the United States leading,” Bramnick said in July 2025.

It's a new dawn of greater authority for kingdom advancement...It is a time of the greatest recovery of territory that the church has ever seen. It is the greatest recovery of territory of Israel. We're seeing things that we've never expected before...We have not only been called to shift our state and our nation, but to occupy territory. The church is starting to awaken...What has been held up in delay [during the Biden administration]...in this last season shall now be released. This is not a season to shrink back but to move forward...God wants you to win and win big. This is a winning season.<sup>58</sup>

Bramnick's rise personifies the multiethnic, charismatic, and globally coordinated character of contemporary Christian Zionism and its meteoric ascent to influence in the MAGA decade. For leaders like Bramnick, Christian Zionist and Christian nationalist advocacy are inseparable parts of the end times process, unfolding around the world. Bramnick's role also tracks with the rise of what has been called the multiracial and multiethnic far-right, exemplified by the growth in Latino, but also Black and Asian, support for Trump. Bramnick and the NAR are weaving the threads of a global, Israel-centric Christian dominionist movement and diversifying the ranks of international authoritarianism in the process. They warrant greater attention as these forces seek to advance their dystopian vision.

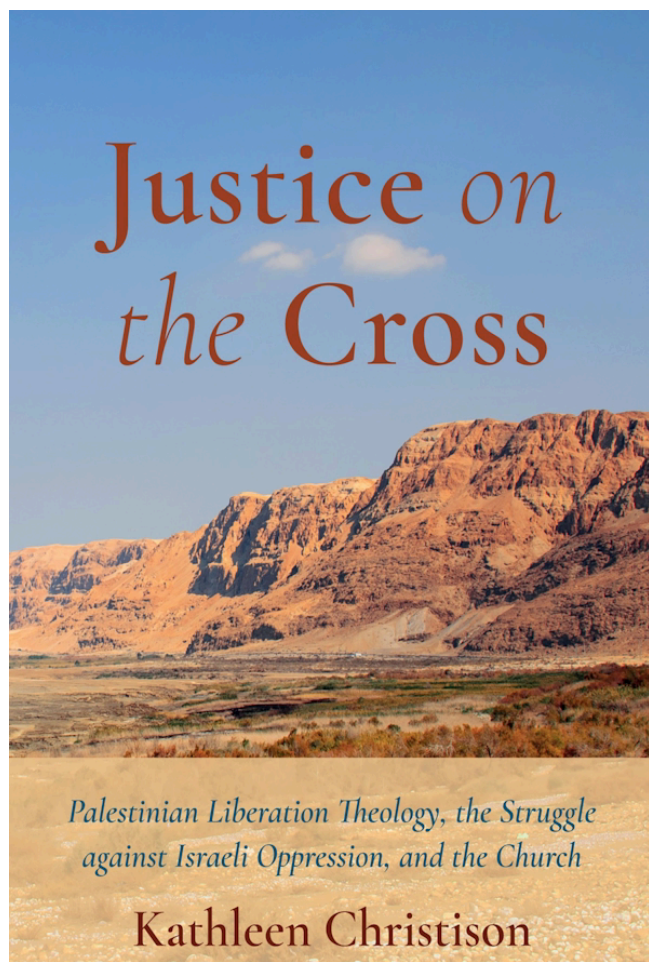
**Ben Lorber** works as a Senior Research Analyst at Political Research Associates, focusing on white nationalism and antisemitism.

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58. RCPNation, “The Strongman Over Florida.”

# Book Review:

## **Kathleen Christison, *Justice on the Cross: Palestinian Liberation Theology, the Struggle Against Israeli Oppression, and the Church* (Wipf and Stock, 2023)**



Full transparency: In May of 2025, I led my eighteenth solidarity tour to Palestine, meeting with leaders of Kairos Palestine and Sabeel, longtime friends; in September, I began reading Kathleen Christison’s *Justice on the Cross* as our Indiana Center for Middle East Peace hosted Rev. Munther Isaac; in October, I finished it as I was co-leading our third “In the Footsteps of Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela” tour in South Africa with Kairos South Africa’s Rev. Edwin Arrison (one of Christison’s manuscript readers), where I interviewed Dr. John de Gruchy. And I’m finishing this review as we host Israel-lobby targeted Congresswoman Cori Bush here and as a new Kairos Palestine document is being issued in Bethlehem – all featured in Christison’s comprehensive book.

## **Book Review: *Justice on the Cross* | ISCZ Vol. 1 No. 2**

A former CIA policy analyst, Christison knows all the major Palestinian organizations, activists, movements, and theologians, as well as Jewish and Muslim voices of conscience; thus, *Justice on the Cross* complements her two previous more political analyses, *Perceptions of Palestine: Their Influence on U.S. Middle East Policy* (1999) and *The Wound of Dispossession: Telling the Palestinian Story* (2002).

In her introduction, Christison offers, broadly, liberation theology's distinctiveness. "Liberation theology is a people's theology," she writes, and then quotes law professor and critical race scholar Kimberle Crenshaw: It is "a theological expression of...the intertwined political and social struggles of the oppressed against the injustices of racism, colonialism, settler colonialism, ethnic privilege, elite privilege, patriarchy, heteronormativity, capitalism, and economic dislocation – of all 'othering.'" (3) Then follows the three major human rights reports – B'Tselem, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International – declaring Israel "an apartheid regime."

The ensuing chapters describe the landscape of Palestinian liberation theology: first, its larger global liberation context; second, the Palestinian context; third, Palestinian Christianity; fourth, the primacy of reading Scripture through "the eyes of the heart;" fifth, Jewish allies; and sixth, Christian Zionism as antagonistic to Palestinian liberation.

Christison gives space to the larger context of South African, Latin American, and African American liberation movements, each of which inspired the development of Palestinian liberation theology. Spend time with any of the Palestinian Christian leaders – Naim Ateek, Omar Haramy, Mitri Raheb, Munther Isaac, Rifat Kassis, and the many Christian NGO leaders – and you hear the names and see framed pictures of King, Gutierrez, Mandela, Tutu, and others. She rightly places the global liberation struggle in the context of the global anti-apartheid, anti-racism struggle. I particularly appreciated how Christison prioritizes the foundational experience of the Church in South Africa and Kairos South Africa's Rev. Edwin Arrison and Bonhoeffer scholar Dr. John de Gruchy.

## Book Review: *Justice on the Cross* | ISCZ Vol. 1 No. 2

Christison also helpfully reminds the reader of post-Holocaust Zionism’s dangerous theological and psychological power, what Marc Ellis called “the new history and new theology [Jews] created for themselves when Israel was created...now framed as a polity that gave Jews power and impunity: from suffering came innocence, from innocence came empowerment, from empowerment came impunity.”<sup>1</sup> This makes the witness of many Jewish allies to anti-Zionism critically important, such as Marc Ellis, Mark Braverman, Brant Rosen, Ilan Pappé, and others, grounded in their Judaism. As Brant Rosen has expressed, “I realized the most Jewish thing I could do was stand with the Palestinians.”<sup>2</sup>

Yet Christison reminds us throughout the book of the tragic irony of American Christians prioritizing Zionist ideology over the Gospel, the modern settler colonial nation state of Israel over the kingdom of God that Jesus preached. She enlists scholars Don Wagner, Walter Brueggeman, and others to critique a Christian Zionism that masks a US political ideology that is dangerous to Christians and Jews and, indeed, to America itself. And while her book was published immediately before the present genocide, we note the further irony of Western, particularly American, Christians calling out a racist, triumphalist Christian nationalism while remaining silent about its sister, a racist colonial Christian and Jewish Zionism, now resulting in Israel’s ethnic cleansing and genocide in Gaza and throughout Palestine.

So, because Christian Zionism is theologically heretical, reading Scripture through the eyes of the contemporary nation-state of Israel rather than the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, many Christians in the West – and their churches, too – have become accomplices to Israel’s genocide. But the heart of *Justice on the Cross* is Chapters 2 and 3, respectively, “Palestine: A Lived Theology,” and “Palestine’s Christians: Theology Crying Out.” She rightly gives a central place to the work of Naim Ateek and Sabeel Palestinian Liberation Theology Center, Kairos Palestine, and Mitri Raheb’s “contextual theology.”

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1. Kathleen Christison, *Justice on the Cross: Palestinian Liberation Theology, the Struggle Against Israeli Oppression, and the Church* (Wipf and Stock, 2023), 179.

2. Christison, *Justice on the Cross*, 149.

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They first must break through the “theological faith Nakba,” as Sabeel co-founder, Cedar Duaybis, calls it and challenge the global church to be faithful to its Gospel.<sup>3</sup> They thus lay a burden on the hearts of Western Christians for what Munther Isaac calls “costly solidarity.” Christison describes how some US denominations (United Church of Christ, Presbyterian Church USA, Christian Church–Disciples of Christ) demonstrate this solidarity with Kairos Palestine’s call.

Palestinian liberation theology is a *cri de coeur*, “a cry from the depths of the Palestinian soul.”<sup>4</sup> The cry is grounded in the cross of Jesus as hermeneutic for the decades-long settler colonial, Zionist apartheid and genocidal oppression of the Palestinian people. Palestinians find not only a parallel but solidarity with Jesus on his cross, and a grounding for their resilience, hope, and inspiration for resistance, or “the unique intimacy of the connection between Jesus’ experience of suffering and the Palestinian Christians’ experience of suffering.”<sup>5</sup> As Mitri Raheb has noted, “There is something very deep, something very existential in the cross that connects it to the struggle of our Palestinian people...[The cross] is a symbol not of tragedy but of hope, not of death but of life”<sup>6</sup> and in the words of Naim Ateek, “Justice is nailed to the cross every day in Palestine.”<sup>7</sup>

Christison’s *Justice on the Cross* provides not only a comprehensive overview, but is itself a work of liberation theology, sharing the many Palestinian voices who cry for justice as they are, with Liberator Jesus, nailed to the cross.

Dr. Michael Spath  
Executive Director  
Indiana Center for Middle East Peace

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3. Christison, *Justice on the Cross*, 78.

4. Christison, *Justice on the Cross*, 123.

5. Christison, *Justice on the Cross*, 99

6. Christison, *Justice on the Cross*, 112, 114.

7. Christison, *Justice on the Cross*, 97.

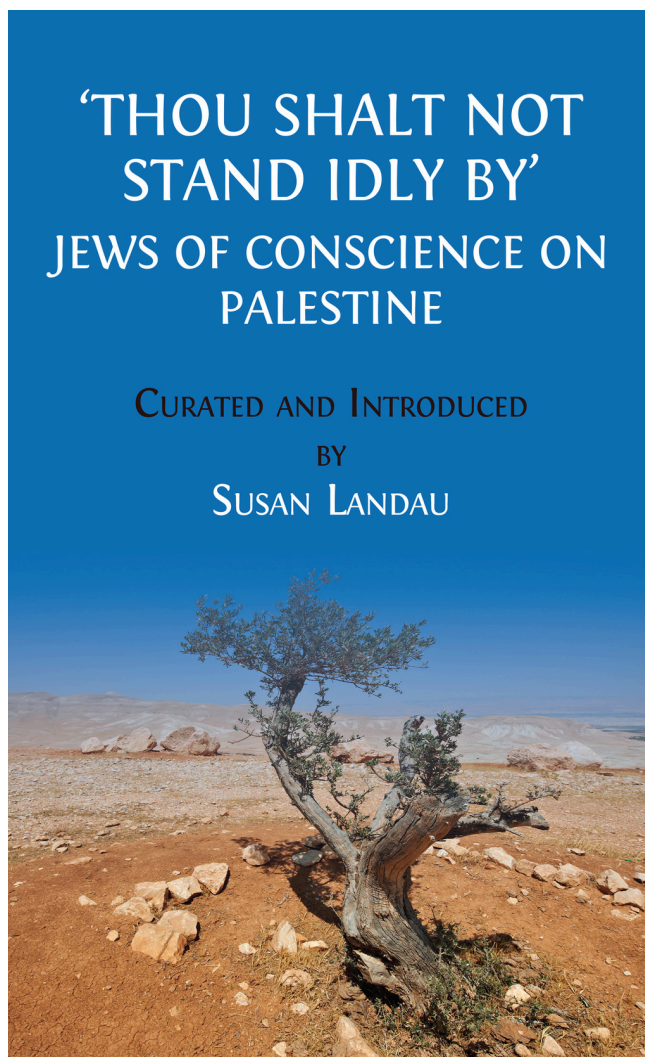
# Book Review:

## Susan Landau, *'Thou Shalt Not Stand Idly By': Jews of Conscience on Palestine* (Open Book Publishers, 2025)

### CHARTING JUDAISM'S MORAL CROSSROADS AT THE GAZA GENOCIDE

Yossi Klein Halevi is an orthodox Jew, an American-born author and journalist who emigrated to Israel in 1982. In his work, Klein Halevi has demonstrated a fierce devotion to the idea and the reality of the state of Israel. He has made his career as a darling of the liberal Zionist camp by balancing his Zionism with a commitment to building bridges between Jews and Palestinians.

As I sat to write this review, a piece by Klein Halevi landed in my inbox. In "Our Season of Reckoning: Israel's Moral Crossroads in Gaza," Klein Halevi posits "moral self-examination" as an essential part of being Jewish – but in this situation, he asks, "when morality itself has been weaponized in the service of terrorism, how dare we risk inadvertently reinforcing the campaign of hatred and lies?"



## Book Review: 'Thou Shalt Not Stand Idly By' | ISCZ Vol. 1 No. 2

He continues:

Because we have no choice. Because preserving our moral credibility is essential for our strength. Because we cannot let the haters determine the inner life of the Jewish people. Because engaging in moral introspection reminds us that Zionism has won and that, even though we are vulnerable, we are no longer victims. Because we owe an accounting of our actions to our friends who have stood with us.<sup>1</sup>

Zionism has won?

If Klein Halevi's words that "morality itself has been weaponized in the service of terrorism" appear incoherent, it is because they are. As the cries of foul and outrage in response to the genocide in Gaza increase, he doubles down on the claim that we have to do this because they hate us and want to kill us — i.e., it's terrorism — in contrast to the lamentable but necessary actions we must take to protect ourselves. Klein Halevi's call for "moral introspection" rests on twin pillars, both of which are necessary to keep the house of Zionism standing. The first is that the starvation of the Gazans and the destruction of their homes and all that makes life possible is not intentional, but the necessary, collateral damage of the "war" against Hamas. The second is that this "war" is the latest chapter in our 2,000-year history of defending ourselves against the always-present threats to our existence, the "enemies," as the Passover liturgy reads, "who in every age rise up to destroy us." We are "no longer victims," asserts Klein Halevi — but his evocation of the "haters" belies this claim. The only accountability owed for our actions, apparently, is the obligation to explain to "our friends who have stood with us" why we have had to do what we have done in self-defense. Klein Halevi calls on Jews to fortify our moral compass — but clearly, we have lost it, captive to an ideology that has shattered our sense of right and wrong. This being said, might we not be tempted to sadly agree with Klein Halevi that Zionism *has won*?

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1. Yossi Klein Halevi, "Our Season of Reckoning: Israel's Moral Crossroads in Gaza," *The Times of Israel*, September 7, 2025, <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/our-season-of-reckoning-israels-moral-crossroads-in-gaza/>.

## Book Review: 'Thou Shalt Not Stand Idly By' | ISCZ Vol. 1 No. 2

This book is an answer to that question.

### A JEWISH, HUMAN, AND MORAL DISASTER

*'Thou Shalt Not Stand Idly By': Jews of Conscience on Palestine*, curated and introduced by Susan Landau, is a compendium of Jewish voices spanning a century and a half of protest, pain, prophecy, and wisdom. The book opens with the familiar words of Rabbi Hillel, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if only for myself, who am I? And if not now, when?" Like a Zen Koan, the words are meant not to provide an answer but to invite reflection, and to remind us that there are no certain, easy answers — "not now," and perhaps not ever. Despite Hillel's question, however, there are times when there is a clear answer — when when is, inescapably, now. Landau follows immediately with a passage from late nineteenth-early-twentieth century essayist and journalist Ahad Ha'am that took my breath away. "I can't put up with the idea," he wrote in 1912,

...that our brethren are morally capable of behaving in such a way to humans of another people...if it is so now, what will be our relations with others if in truth we shall achieve at the end of times power in Eretz Israel? And if this be the "Messiah," I do not wish to see him coming.

Ahad Ha'am's *cri de coeur* sets the tone for the voices in this volume that speak to the calamity that has befallen the Jewish people. He does not use the word, but calamity is what Ahad Ha'am sees; the antithesis of a Messianic Age is what he fears. Landau follows Ahad Ha'am with the words of Henry Schwarzschild, who escaped Nazi Germany as a child. A crusader for human rights, Schwarzschild headed the ACLU's opposition to the death penalty, in the 1960s joining the Freedom Riders and organizing lawyers to work for voting rights in the South. He was a fierce critic of Israel: "The existence of this Jewish ethnic-religious nation state is a Jewish, i.e., human and moral disaster and violates every remaining value for which Judaism and Jew might exist in history."

We do have a choice. It is the difference between the agonized hand-wringing of the

## Book Review: *'Thou Shalt Not Stand Idly By'* | ISCZ Vol. 1 No. 2

liberal Zionists, the “shoot and cry” reflex of the most “moral army in the world,” the “tormented dance of the colonizer” described by Jewish Tunisian postcolonial writer Albert Memmi — and the moral clarity resounding in the pages of this book.<sup>2</sup>

Zionism has not won. Not for the Jews represented in this extraordinary collection. Not for those Jews who feel to their core how their tradition has been hijacked by an ideology that reinforces, rather than heals, the trauma and fears of a people wounded by millennia of marginalization, slaughter, and persecution. Not for those Jews who have reached within to claim the deepest of human instincts and needs – not to flee, but to join, not to isolate, but to connect.

### TRIBAL XENOPHOBIAS

The voices in the opening section of *'Thou Shalt Not Stand Idly By'*, titled (ironically?) “A land without people,” go to the heart of the matter. Here is I.F. Stone:

When good men do evil, we confront the essence of human tragedy...For me the Arab problem is the number one Jewish problem. How we act toward the Arabs will determine what kind of people we become: either oppressors and racists in our turn like those from whom we have suffered, or able to transcend the tribal xenophobias that afflict mankind.

If nationalism is the heart of the matter, then Zionism is the brain, the muscles, the arms, and the legs. In the section titled “The Zionist idea,” we listen in on the Jewish conversation, a conversation that, after 1948, was buried under the avalanche of US support for Israel and drowned out by the tidal wave of love for the romantic narrative marketed in books, newspapers, and movies (Leon Uris’s *Exodus* being the exemplar).

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2 . Mark Braverman, “The Tormented Dance of the Colonizer: Peter Beinart, Liberal Zionism, and the Battle for Palestine, *Mondoweiss*, April 6, 2021, <https://mondoweiss.net/2021/04/the-tormented-dance-of-the-colonizer-peter-beinart-liberal-zionism-and-the-battle-for-palestine/>.

## **Book Review: *'Thou Shalt Not Stand Idly By'* | ISCZ Vol. 1 No. 2**

But the conversation—passionate, fevered and, in hindsight, desperate— has continued, and the voices are found in this volume: Buber, Einstein, Magnes, Arendt, and, continuing into our times, Sara Roy, Marc Ellis, Nom Chomsky, Jeff Halper, Judith Butler, Howard Zinn, Tony Judt. They are all here.

Some who witnessed and in many cases participated in the formative years of Zionism understood the danger. Judah Magnes wrote in 1929 that “if the only way of establishing the Jewish National Home is upon the bayonets of some European Empire, our whole enterprise is not worthwhile.” In 1938, Albert Einstein was “afraid of the inner damage Judaism will sustain – especially from the development of a narrow nationalism within our ranks.” And can we hear the same doubt, the same warning in what appear to be words of reassurance offered by Martin Buber? Doth he protest too much when he writes in 1921 that “[o]ur national desire to renew the life of the people Israel to their ancient homeland, however, is not aimed at another people...Our return to the Land of Israel will not be achieved at the expense of another people’s rights.” It was an urgent conversation, decades before the founding of the state, among men and women who, prophetically, foresaw the catastrophe that might befall us if Zionism should “win.”

In the years following the state’s founding, and especially since 1967 with the rise of the settler movement, these voices have grown stronger. The book chronicles the struggle to come to terms with what Allan Brownfeld of the American Society for Judaism calls Judaism’s “dangerous wrong turn” and what I describe as a “tragically misguided answer to our history of suffering.” Much ink continues to be spilled on the question of “peoplehood” with respect to the Jewish claim on the land. It is a question that now takes on universal significance. It forces us to confront the urgent questions of property, borders, armies, and fortresses to protect “us” from “them,” the fear, the grasping, the “autistic nationalism,” as Jeff Halper writes, that has set us on the murderous course of erasing a people and a culture. These are questions that must be asked, but not only in the case of Israel and the Palestinians.

## **Book Review: *'Thou Shalt Not Stand Idly By'* | ISCZ Vol. 1 No. 2**

### **COSTLY HOPE, COSTLY JOY**

Earlier this year, I attended a conference in Illinois titled “Church at the Crossroads.” Opening the gathering, Palestinian pastor Munther Isaac implored 800 Christians from across the United States to embrace “costly resistance.” To reject the theology that has taken the lives of at least 20,000 Gazan children, he said, means to open up to what it costs to give up our illusions, our comforts, and our certainties. In calling his fellow Christians to reclaim the core of their tradition, Isaac was invoking the voice of a radical Jewish reformer of two thousand years ago who called on his fellow Jews to reject the theocracy of that time and place, renouncing the Temple cult and the puppet monarchy in league with Rome. Entering Jerusalem with his followers, Jesus stood with his disciples in the courtyard of the Temple and proclaimed, “Destroy this Temple! Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left on another, all this will be thrown down.”

It is already coming down, Jesus was saying. Whenever we stand with the rejected and the marginalized, those impoverished and dispossessed by the greed of Empire, we are by our example and by our witness bringing it down, stone by stone. The voices in Susan Landau’s book stand in this same Jewish tradition, in the willingness to articulate with absolute clarity the unacceptability of the current order. Quoted in the book, President of the World Zionist Organization Nahum Goldman, speaking out in 1981 against the bombing of Lebanon, called it *hilul hashem*, the desecration of the Holy Name—an offense to God (for many Zionists, as for Goldman, Lebanon was a turning point). When we achieve this moral clarity, what we gain is the joy of claiming our core humanity, of being part of what Martin Luther King, Jr. (after Josiah Royce) called the Beloved Community. It is a synagogue in Philadelphia on Yom Kippur, inviting worshipers to interrupt the chanting of the Torah by reading the words of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. It is Rabbi Brant Rosen of Congregation Tzedek Chicago saying that the only words that were appropriate for his Yom Kippur sermon were those of the people of Gaza, and proceeding accordingly.

### **THE FATEFUL DISEASE OF OUR TIME**

Why one more book about Jewish voices on Zionism? Why, in this moment, with the

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genocidal intent of the Jewish homeland project now inescapably clear, continue to center the thoughts, feelings, and even protests of Jews with respect to this human rights and humanitarian catastrophe? Is it not time – and long overdue – to release humankind from the requirement to seek the permission of the Jewish people to hold Israel to account for its crimes, to acknowledge that this is a human rights issue like any other, and that the Jews, whether seen as a nation, ethnicity, or religious community, possess no special status among the peoples of the world, no “get out of jail free” card? It is a fair question — and the voices in this book furnish the answer. What stands at the center of their message is not their protest and their moral clarity. Rather, it is that in jettisoning Zionism they have rid themselves of the brittle, victim-tinged exceptionalism that lies at the root of the Jewish national homeland project. It is the same supremacist, colonial worldview that has been the scourge of humankind throughout history. It is Albert Einstein, quoted in the book, bemoaning the “exaggerated nationalism, brought on by blind hatred, [which] is the fateful disease of our time.”

In the final section of the book, titled “Engaging Jewish voices of conscience and dissent,” assembled in the aftermath of October 7, 2023, Oxford doctoral student Jamie Stern-Weiner writes, “[i]f there appears little short-term prospect of peace taking root in Gaza’s scorched soil, seeds of hope have sprouted elsewhere, as a solidarity movement of unprecedented size and vigor” that has emerged on a global scale. “Progressive Jews are in the militant vanguard” of this movement, he adds. And here is the hope — not for the salvation of the Jewish people, although it may augur our salvation if that is to be — but because in so doing we have joined the broader struggle. Gaza, writes Stern-Weiner, “has become a symbol for injustice, inequality, and the hypocrisies of power writ large, and in this symbol, the glimmer of a New International can be espied.”

*A New International*—the beginning of the end of nationalisms, the iniquities of colonialism, the destructive consequences of greed and grasping and othering. We can be more than “us.” Indeed, there is only an “us” when we reject the very notion of “us and them” as a building block of our identity. We can move beyond our suffering and our fear. We can bring down the walls of what Ilan Pappé has termed “Fortress

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Israel.” We can, as we bring forth from the ashes and blood of our doomed ethnic nationalist project a new theology, one that, in the words of Jewish liberation theologian Marc Ellis quoted in the book, “confronts Holocaust and empowerment with the dynamics of solidarity, providing a bridge to others as it critiques our own abuses of power.”

Solidarity with the Palestinians places us squarely in our own context of white supremacy and encroaching fascism. Munther Isaac has declared that “Gaza has become the moral compass of the world.” Committing ourselves to the struggle here at home is one of the most important things we can do to support the Palestinians, besieged by the very same domination system that is carrying out the assault on human rights and freedom in the United States. What the government of our country succeeds in doing to the Palestinian people comes back, like post-colonial writer Aimé Césaire’s boomerang, as permission to do to the same to its own people.<sup>3</sup> The Palestinian cry summons us to rescue ourselves as well — to fight for what is precious: community, compassion, care for the vulnerable, and uncompromising dedication to equality and human dignity. The voices of resistance and dedication to justice in Susan Landau’s book – then, today, and tomorrow — will bring down the Temple, one stone at a time, one voice at a time.

Originally published in *Mondoweiss*, November 16, 2025.

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Mark Braverman  
Executive Director  
Kairos USA

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3. Noura Erakat, “The Boomerang Comes Back,” *The Boston Review*, Winter 2025, <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/the-boomerang-comes-back/>.

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