

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.¹ 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.²

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

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.



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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.”³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵ 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

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.”⁶ 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.⁷ 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.”⁸ 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.”⁹

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.¹⁰ I suggest that the “specific Christian commitments” of my definition is sufficiently vague to include thinkers as

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.”¹¹

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.”¹² 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.”¹³

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.¹⁴ 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.

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.¹⁵ 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.”¹⁶

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

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.¹⁷

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.¹⁸

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.”¹⁹ 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.”²⁰ 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.²¹

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.”²²

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.”

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.”²³ 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.”²⁴ 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.²⁵

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."²⁶

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.

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.²⁷

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),²⁸ 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.²⁹

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.³⁰

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.”³¹

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.

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.³² 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.”³³

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.³⁴ 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.”³⁵

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 economics³⁶ —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.”³⁷ 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.³⁸ 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.”³⁹

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.”⁴⁰

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.”⁴¹

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.⁴² 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.”⁴³ 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.⁴⁴ 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.”⁴⁵ 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,

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.’”⁴⁶

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.⁴⁷ 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.”⁴⁸ 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.”⁴⁹ 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.

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.⁵⁰ 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.”⁵¹ 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.⁵²

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

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.

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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.⁵⁴ 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."⁵⁵ 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.⁵⁶ 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.⁵⁷

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."⁵⁸ 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."⁵⁹ 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.⁶⁰

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

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."⁶² 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,"⁶³ 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."⁶⁴

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.

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.

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