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Who's Who Among Christian Nationalists?

Dominion – or control of America – is the shared political goal

Today's US Christian nationalist movement is an outgrowth of what some called the Christian New Right in the 1980s, when Christian conservatives flocked to support Ronald Reagan's presidency, and many joined Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority. Today's Christian nationalists share a common core belief that America was founded as a Christian nation, and that biblical principles should guide our laws and other aspects of our political, civic, and social life. While many people debate how "Christian" this movement is today, there is no debate that its religious project is political in nature and the goal is power. Such beliefs are found throughout Project 2025, which critics view as an applied policy distillation of the US Christian nationalist platform.

Dominion over America

The 1980s gave rise to a blend of theocratic belief called Dominion Theology (DT), or *dominionism*, that emerged from two Christian protestant traditions: a Reformed or Calvinist camp, and a Pentecostal or Charismatic one. Dominionism derives from the Book of Genesis, in which God tells Adam and Eve to have "dominion" over the Earth and its animals. The term was first defined by right-wing watchdogs Chip Berlet and Frederick Clarkson at Political Research Associates, who warned that dominionists were leading the Christian nationalist movement.

In a nutshell, dominionism describes the theocratic belief that Christians have a biblical duty to fight non-Christian influences and gain control of all earthly political and cultural institutions until the second coming of Jesus. Taking power, in other words, is doing God's work.

Dominionists share three key beliefs, noted Berlet and Clarkson:ⁱ One is that America was, and should again be, a Christian nation -- a denial of the Enlightenment roots of our democracy. Two, the Ten Commandments, or biblical principles, should be the basis of American law, while our Constitution should serve to implement biblical doctrine. Three, Christianity is the "true" religion that matters; no others are equal, while dominionism reflects what God really wants.

Christian nationalists are found among the many Christian denominations. Christianity is broadly divided into **Roman Catholic, Protestant, and (Eastern) Orthodox branches**. In the US, Catholics and Protestants are the two main denominations. The larger Protestant groups are the **Southern Baptist Convention**, the **United Methodist Church** (including the **African-American Methodist Church**), the **National Baptist Convention**, the **Evangelical Lutheran**, and the fast-growing **Pentecostal churches**, who include **Presbyterians**.ⁱⁱ

Today's Militant Dominionists



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The two main schools of modern dominionism are **Christian Reconstructionism** and a newer Pentecostal offshoot known as the **New Apostolic Reformation** (NAR), which political leaders such as Mike Johnson and Ted Cruz openly embrace.

Christian Reconstructionism evolved from the ideas and writing of Rousas John (R.J) Rushdoony, a towering figure of the 1980s Christian right. Followers believe that the Kingdom of God was established at Christ's resurrection and is progressively evolving, and that Jesus will return once Christianity has transformed the whole Kingdom. They have a postmillennial – some say apocalyptic – worldview. They believe the God of the Bible is the sovereign source of all authority. Some believe that biblical law, with punishments such as stoning for adultery, should replace secular law.

The New Apostolic Reformation has its roots in Pentecostalism and dates to 1863, and also blends in evangelism. C. Peter Wagner is considered the father figure of the NAR, which draws on dominion theology and a critique of humanism/pluralism. Followers believe the Holy Spirit is the true God, who emanates from God the Father and Jesus his son, who have continued to send Apostles to carry out the unfinished work of creating a Christian kingdom on earth. Church leaders call themselves apostles and prophets and view themselves as spiritual warriors determined to bring dominion over the “seven pillars,” or mountains, of society.

The Seven Mountains Mandate

NAR leaders call on Christians to “reclaim the seven mountains of culture”: government, religion, media, family, business, education, and arts and entertainment. The idea is linked to bible verse 9 from Revelation 17:1-18, which reads, “And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains.” NAR followers believe that taking control of the seven mountains will bring about the return of Jesus – and end times.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The Seven Mountains Mandate exploded into American public awareness in 2016, when former President Trump tapped NAR leader Paula White, a Florida ‘prosperity theology’ megachurch televangelist, to chair his evangelical advisory board. It was soon revealed that many other top Republicans are NAR members. They include Mike Johnson; Rafael Cruz, father of Ted Cruz, and his son, Ted; Lauren Boebert; and Tom Parker, Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court.

Diversifying Dominion

US polls consistently show that older white evangelists make up the majority of Christian nationalists, and many are Republican voters. The movement has long reflected a white supremacy, racist agenda. But a growing number of US evangelicals are Black, Latino, and Asian-American. Some belong to **Church United**, a fast-growing branch that blends charismatic



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and Pentecostal tradition, founded by Jim Domen, a California pastor who is also focused on voter outreach to non-white Christians. Church United offers services in Spanish and organizes pastors across states; it has a state affiliate, Alianza de Pastores Unidos de San Diego.

Domen is among Christian pastors pushing an antigay agenda from a highly personal perspective -- as a militant born again “ex-gay.” He was mentored for six years by Tony Perkins, head of Focus on the Family, a division of Family Research Council; both groups are avidly antigay. Church United has taken up FRC’s political mission of recruiting and training pastors as “culture changers” who get sent to lobby lawmakers in Washington, DC to promote biblical values, and attend the FRC’s annual Watchman on the Wall conference in Sacramento.

Watchmen on the Wall is the FRC’s network of over 28,000 pastors that blends prophetic ministry and political organizing: each pastor commits to being a “watchman” to monitor the culture and advocate for political change. FRC views Latino evangelicals as crucial to this fight. Its Watchman website states that the Constitutional separation of church and state is false: “We believe that since God ordained government (Rom. 13:1), He would want His people to influence it.” Its website offers voter tools, and lists Project 2025’s Heritage Foundation as a key partner.

Other Branches

Many other dominionist branches make up the Christian nationalist movement, including the fast-growing **Independent Network Charismatic** (INC) Christianity, and **WallBuilders**. The latter was founded by David Barton, based in Texas, and promotes revisionist historical claims, including that the First Amendment was not meant to establish religious freedom.

Looking to Project 2025, one sees echoes of dominionism and the Seven Mountains Mandate in its blueprint to dismantle the US government, remake all its institutions, align all policy to reflect biblical principles – and take control of America. Project 2025’s war on gender and diversity also reflects the Christian nationalist strategy of building political power by focusing on polarizing hot-button cultural issues and radicalizing conservatives and its evangelical base. That’s why the Heritage Foundation had declared Latino and NAR leadership recruitment a 2024 priority, too.

All this is also why critics brand Project 2025 a de facto Christian nationalist vision paper, one that reflects an underlying long-view dominionist call and political goal of transforming secular, pluralistic America into an earthly Kingdom of God, run by its true believers. -- *ACD*

i Berlet, Chip and Clarkson, Frederick. “Dominionism Rising, A Theocratic Movement Hiding in Plain Sight,” *The Public Eye, Summer 2016*. Political Research Associates. August 18, 2016.

ii “America’s Christian Landscape: A Comprehensive Overview of the Largest Christian Denominations,” *Christian Pure*, January 10, 2024.

iii Stewart, Katherine. *The Power Worshipers: Inside the Dangerous Rise of Christian Nationalism*, Bloomsbury Publishers, 2019.