



SEVEN MOUNTAINS

THE ENDURING PUZZLE of why so many evangelicals support Donald Trump has occasioned dozens of books, hundreds of academic papers, thousands of op-eds, and millions of social media posts. Eighty-one percent of white evangelicals voted for Trump in 2016 and in similar numbers in 2020. That's a higher percentage of white evangelicals than voted for Ronald Reagan (1980, 1984), George H. W. Bush (1988, 1992), George W. Bush (2000, 2004), John McCain (2008), or Mitt Romney (2012).¹ A 2018 survey that included nonwhite evangelicals showed a more muddled picture but one nonetheless firmly in Trump's camp, with 58 percent of all evangelicals voting for Trump (77 percent of white evangelicals, 9 percent of Black, 41 percent of Latino/a, and 48 percent of other ethnicities).² Moreover, across these two presidential elections, evangelicals—particularly, but not exclusively, white evangelicals—have proved to be one of Donald Trump's most loyal constituencies, perpetually expressing their approval of the job he did in office and intensely backing him against any rivals, including politicians who were more outwardly evangelical and more overtly upstanding.

So how did Trump elicit and secure such ardent evangelical support? Or as the question has been posed to me by liberal Christians, Jews, Muslims, and nonreligious people, how could anyone who claims to be moral and religious support that man?

No simple explanation can account for the complex behavior of tens of millions of American voters, but this chapter puts in place one big piece of the puzzle as to how this evangelical-Trump alliance came about. We've already examined the way that Paula White used her position of influence advising Trump to integrate her fellow Independent Charismatic (fourth-quadrant) leaders into the highest echelons of the religious right. Now we'll look at the broader structures of power in American evangelicalism and the theological ideas that were used to vindicate Christian Trumpism.

What are the actual biblical citations or theological frames that evangelicals have used to articulate their Trump support? Where did those frames come from? And how have those ideas interacted with the powerful evangelical establishment and its elites? We will consider these questions through the prism of

a man who has been, inarguably, one of Donald Trump's most prominent evangelical champions: Lance Wallnau. While Wallnau is not a household name in broader American evangelicalism, and you may have never heard of him, we cannot fathom evangelical support for Trump without understanding the pivotal role that Wallnau's theology and prophecies have played in creating an evangelical rationale for making Trump king of the mountain.

A former charismatic pastor who's now a mottled blend of motivational speaker, business consultant, prophet, theologian, and political pundit, Wallnau was, in 2015, a fringe Independent Charismatic character, an unlikely spiritual guide for the movement of Christian Trumpism. But no evangelical leader has done more to theologically backstop the presidency of Donald Trump than Lance Wallnau.

Like Ché Ahn and Cindy Jacobs, Lance Wallnau was a mentee of Peter Wagner's, and he contributed significantly to the NAR ideology and movement growth. Along the path of understanding Wallnau—having grasped the strategic-level spiritual warfare and apostolic governance dimensions of the movement—we'll also come to understand the third and final leg of our NAR stool: its political theology, which has been shaped around Wallnau's concept of the Seven Mountain Mandate. But before we get to Wallnau and his ideas, we need to think about the evangelical establishment that Wagner, Wallnau, and Trump were so successful in disrupting.

Establishment Evangelicalism, Evangelical Elites, and Donald Trump

Evangelicalism, as a modern movement, emerged in the United States in the 1940s. To be sure, many people were using the adjective *evangelical* (as in “evangelical Christians”) in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but the term was then roughly a synonym for Protestant, representing a wide spectrum of liberal and conservative Christian denominations and identities.

Early twentieth-century conservative American Protestantism was dominated by a theologically reactionary movement of churches and leaders who called themselves “the Fundamentalists.” The Fundamentalists were frustrated with how loosey-goosey many of their fellow Protestants had become. They worried about the creeping influence of biblical criticism that was increasingly popular in American seminaries and universities and undermined many conventional assumptions about the Bible. They worried about the lax morality of the Progressive Era. They worried about the growing integration of Darwin's theory of evolution into science. The Fundamentalists were also deeply pessimistic and antagonistic toward American culture and, really, anyone who disagreed with them.

So in the 1940s, a still-conservative but more congenial and erudite group of Fundamentalist leaders decided that they were tired of the gloomy separatism and internal bickering of Fundamentalism, and

they invested in identifying with a different term: *evangelical*. This group of ex-Fundamentalists, which centered on the evangelist Billy Graham, would go on to found a raft of institutions: *Christianity Today* magazine, the flagship journal of American evangelicalism; Fuller Theological Seminary, the foremost seminary of the young movement; and the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), an umbrella organization for various Protestant denominations who wanted to adopt this more affirmative *evangelical* as their moniker.

Over the decades, more organizations—missions agencies, seminaries, Bible colleges, universities, publishing houses, parachurch (interdenominational) organizations, and political advocacy coalitions—would embrace the evangelical label, creating an enormous evangelical institutional footprint. True to the culture-positive vision of the original evangelical leaders in the 1940s, the leaders of these institutions were culturally savvy and college-educated, with many holding advanced degrees. And when the media sought out people to speak for evangelicalism, they interviewed this upper echelon of elite evangelicals—journalists, college presidents, CEOs, authors, pastors, and denominational leaders. To the degree that the theologically, geographically, and regionally diverse evangelical movement had any coherence, it was offered by these establishment leaders.

So when we come to an event like the Capitol Riot, some analysts were quick to note the many signs and signals of evangelical piety and Christian nationalism in the crowds. But some evangelical leaders and their allies pushed back, arguing that while some of the rioters and their crowd of supporters may have been using evangelical symbols or invoking evangelical shibboleths, they were *not* representing “evangelicalism.”

For instance, the NAE put out a statement dutifully condemning the January 6 riot, saying, “The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) denounces the violence at the U.S. Capitol as well as the nation’s longstanding vices that led to this chaos.” But when it came to identifying some of the rioters as evangelicals, the NAE was more equivocal: “The mob at the Capitol was provoked by leaders, including President Trump, who have employed lies and conspiracy theories for political gain. *Evangelicals are people who are committed to truth and should reject untruths.*”³ So if the riot was premised on a lie, and evangelicals are “committed to truth,” then evangelicals who joined the riot must, at the very least, not have been good evangelicals, right?

The most forthright of these arguments came from veteran Christian religion reporter and commentator Terry Mattingly, who, a week after January 6, would write in an editorial that he could see no discernible pattern of connections between the rioters and establishment evangelical institutions: “Anyone who studies ‘evangelicalism’—white or otherwise—knows that we are talking about a movement based on the work of powerful denominations (this includes megachurches), parachurch

groups, publishers (and authors) and major colleges, universities and seminaries.” Mattingly went on to hazard that those Christians who did join the riot were “people from small, possibly independent, congregations with zero connections to institutions of evangelical power” and that “almost certainly means that these people are part of a smaller niche and are not, again, linked to or even influenced by power centers inside evangelicalism.”⁴

Mattingly here is very much reflecting the journalistic and academic conventional wisdom about American evangelicalism: that evangelical Christianity exerts its cultural, political, and religious influence through weighty institutions and large voter blocs. It follows that if we want to understand the trendlines and zeitgeist of evangelicalism, we must continue to look to those institutions and their representative spokespeople. Hence, if establishment evangelicalism was not, in any way, directly tied to or even supportive of the riot, some who participated may have been evangelicals in some sense, but they were not representing “true evangelicalism.”

This establishment approach to understanding American evangelicalism has almost entirely misapprehended the mystical ties that bind so many evangelicals to Donald Trump. Evangelical elites—the institutional leaders and muckety mucks who align around the NAE and whom Mattingly suggests guide and manage the “power centers” of evangelicalism—were actually outposts of resistance to Trump early on.

During the 2016 campaign, even as Trump was winning over huge swaths of evangelical voters on the ground, the evangelical elites generally wanted nothing to do with him. Trump’s evangelical support, particularly early on in that campaign, came not through the power centers but the grassroots.

This divide between elite evangelicalism and populist evangelicalism was evident at *Christianity Today*, the most respected news outlet speaking for and to the evangelical community. I’ve talked to multiple reporters and editors who worked at *Christianity Today* during the 2016 election, and they’ve described the staff as shocked when Donald Trump won the election, especially by the fact that he received such stalwart evangelical support. Mark Galli, the *Christianity Today* editor at the time, would later describe the post-election sentiment in his elite evangelical circles as “Who are these people? I know hardly anyone, let alone any evangelical Christian, who voted for Trump.”⁵

Pause for a moment and consider that statement: the editor and reporters at the most historic and august evangelical publication in America were befuddled by and relationally distant from the groundswell surge that led to 81 percent of white evangelicals voting for Trump.

Donald Trump exposed a stark divide between elite establishment evangelicals (the genteel and media-savvy leaders) and grassroots evangelicals. Many of the elite evangelicals, over time, followed suit and came around to tentatively supporting Trump—eventually—but the evangelical alignment

around Trump has not not emanated from elite evangelicalism. No, it came burbling up from the evangelical hoi polloi. If anything, the 2016 campaign left the elites of the evangelical establishment in the position of the fabled leader in the French Revolution who said, “There go my people. I must find out where they are going so I can lead them.”

While this institution-tracking conventional wisdom—which the NAE and *Christianity Today* embody and which Mattingly gamely follows—may have been well suited to understanding evangelicalism in the twentieth century, it is seriously outdated and creates dangerous knowledge gaps in the twenty-first. This analytical default misconstrues the tectonic shifts that have upended evangelical power and evangelical politics in the past twenty years. It fails to recognize the insurgent forces that are rapidly redistributing power within American evangelicalism, and it pushes toward a conclusion that an episode like January 6 was marginal or fringy instead of a searing warning about the state of American evangelicalism.

I have tracked dozens of prominent evangelical Christian leaders—some of them, like Ché Ahn and Cindy Jacobs, national and international celebrities with incredible reach and influence—who were in the crowds around the Capitol that day. These leaders do not hail from the institutions of the elite or recognized evangelical establishment. They have not been covered systematically or comprehensively in any media reporting about January 6. Yet all these characters are firmly ensconced in that particular segment of evangelicalism that we call the Independent Charismatic or fourth-quadrant world.

And no figure has been more important to theologizing Christian Trumpism for the charismatic and evangelical masses than Lance Wallnau.

A Pastor in Search of a Program

Like many Independent Charismatic leaders, Lance Whitaker Wallnau has a biography that is both murky and perpetually refashioned. He says that he worked for a Fortune 500 company before transitioning to a career in ministry, though I can find nowhere that he names that company. An online bio of Wallnau, evidently of his own creation, says that he worked “20 years as an entrepreneur in the Oil Industry,” though that math is pretty iffy given that, by the time he was thirty-seven, he was working as a full-time pastor in Rhode Island.⁶ Lance’s father, Carl Wallnau, was a World War II veteran who served under General Patton, then earned a law degree and worked as a vice president at Meenan Oil before becoming CEO of Swan Oil Company in Pennsylvania, perhaps undergirding Lance’s claims to have pursued a career in that same industry.⁷

Similarly, Lance's undergraduate degree-granting institution is unspecified. He claims to hold a master's in theological studies from "South West Christian University," a school name that does not exist but appears to be a reference to *Southwestern* Christian University, a Pentecostal school in Oklahoma. In 2012, he also received a doctorate from Phoenix University of Theology. That school, which primarily serves midcareer independent and Pentecostal pastors and ministry leaders, offers academic credit for "experiential learning," a practice that leads some scholars to label the school a "diploma mill."⁸ My point is not that Wallnau doesn't possess any of his claimed credentials; it's simply that a conventionally orderly and respectable résumé is not the criterion for leadership in Independent Charismatic circles. No, the coin of the realm is one's ability to communicate compellingly, exercise the gifts of the Spirit in interesting ways, and hold an audience's attention—and those qualities Lance Wallnau has in spades.

Somewhere in his itinerant early adult life, Wallnau met Esther Mallett, a major West Coast leader from the Latter Rain movement and founder of Community Chapel World Outreach, a Latter Rain network of charismatic churches. Wallnau would call Mallett his spiritual mother, and she trained him in the Latter Rain teachings about apostles, prophets, and the end-times movement of God.⁹ Mallett set Lance up as pastor of one of her churches in Cranston, Rhode Island.

So in the mid-1990s, Wallnau was serving as the pastor of Word of Life Covenant Church in Cranston. In his speaking today, he frequently references this phase of his life in disparaging ways, joking about how he was hoping for it to become a megachurch, hoping for revival, hoping to significantly impact the local community, but nothing materialized. There are remarkable parallels between Wallnau and Ché Ahn and Lou Engle: all three men were washed-out charismatic pastors in the 1990s who longed to have greater influence and to lead an exciting revival but who felt constrained by the limitations of traditional church structures.

In 1996, evidently seeking a creative outlet, Lance and his wife, Annabelle, created Lance Wallnau Ministries, a nonprofit headquartered at their church.¹⁰ You can see the Latter Rain influence peeking through in the charter documents for Wallnau's ministry. For instance, he described the purpose of Lance Wallnau Ministries in 1998: "To establish an apostolic mission . . . providing for church planting . . . establishing spiritual covering for and authority over members of the five fold ministry and groups seeking association in the fellowship."¹¹

This could easily be the charter for Ché Ahn's HIM apostolic network, likewise founded in 1996. But Wallnau wasn't in Wagner's NAR mentoring circles at that time. He was trying to forge his own model of what "apostolic" ministry could look like.

It was in this disillusioned and discontented phase that Wallnau encountered a concept that would radically alter his life and bring him into the upper echelons of charismatic celebritydom. In 2000, at the

age of forty-four, Wallnau met a man named Loren Cunningham, a revered figure and elder statesman of Independent Charismaticism. Cunningham was the founder of Youth With A Mission (YWAM), a charismatic youth organization famous for sending short-term Christian missionaries to troubled areas around the world. Cunningham told Wallnau a story of something that happened to him twenty-five years earlier, in 1975. This story has been told and retold so many times—by Cunningham, Wallnau, and others—that it’s taken on a mythical quality, leaving its factual origins hard to discern. But here are the contours.

In August 1975, Loren Cunningham and his wife, Darlene, were vacationing in Colorado, and while there, they had scheduled dinner with Bill Bright and his wife, Vonette. Bright was the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, now simply called Cru, which was a more mainstream evangelical college ministry. According to Wallnau’s rendition of the story, it was a major donor to both Campus Crusade and YWAM who insisted the two leaders meet for dinner.¹² The night before their meal together, when Cunningham was praying, he felt that God was giving him a revelation for how to “disciple the nation.”¹³ In this revelation, which Cunningham has described as a sort of auditory download, God told him about seven spheres of influence—basically areas of society—into which Christians should go to spread Christianity’s impact in the world. The seven spheres of influence Cunningham received were: the home; the church; the schools; government and politics; the media; arts, entertainment, and sports; and commerce, science, and technology.¹⁴

The next evening, as they were getting ready to meet the Brights for dinner, Loren Cunningham wrote these seven spheres on a sheet of paper so that he could share them with Bill Bright. But in Cunningham’s telling, before he could do that, Bill had pulled out his own list of seven areas of cultural influence, which God had revealed directly to *him* the previous day. As the two compared lists, they saw slightly different phrasings but more or less the same set of ideas.

Cunningham viewed this as a miraculous work of God, who simultaneously revealed the same game plan to two key evangelical leaders the same day. Cunningham would also narrate how, a few days later, he would compare the seven spheres he and Bright had agreed on with another list he heard articulated by Francis Schaeffer, an evangelical philosopher and theologian who served as a major intellectual of the religious right. Schaeffer’s list was evidently in agreement with theirs.

Cunningham would sometimes refer to the seven spheres as the “seven mind molders of culture,” and he began using them in YWAM trainings. The basic idea emerging from Cunningham and Bright was that Christians should not only be involved in the church sphere or the home-family sphere, but they should try to have a positive influence in all spheres of society. For Cunningham, you “disciple nations” by getting Christians to branch out and make positive influence in all the seven spheres of society.

To be fair, the idea of dividing society up into different spheres of authority and imagining Christian influence in each goes back a long way in Protestant theology, at least to the thought of Abraham Kuyper, an early twentieth-century Calvinist theologian and Dutch prime minister. You could trace some elements of this idea back to John Calvin himself, in the sixteenth century. By the 1970s, when Bright and Cunningham were conferring, these ideas were enjoying a resurgence through the spread of Christian Reconstructionism, the Calvinist movement that was pushing dominion theology and would provide many of the theological underpinnings for the religious right in America. But what Cunningham added to the Kuyperian/Reconstructionist concept was a charismatic and prophetic gloss: God has now revealed these important political concepts mystically in the late twentieth century.

What's interesting is that the seven-spheres concept has been around since at least 1975, but it didn't really gain much of a following until Lance Wallnau heard about it. When Wallnau learned this story directly from Cunningham in 2000, he found the seven spheres magnetic. This was the signature concept or teaching for which Wallnau had been searching. But he wouldn't merely transmit the seven-spheres concept to his own audiences; no, Wallnau would put his own spin on it.

Prophetic Memes and Meme Makers

When Wallnau heard Cunningham's account of the seven spheres or "seven mind molders of culture," he linked it with another story he had just heard. In this other story, which a friend of Wallnau's had recounted to him, a Christian man in Georgia had a heart attack and near-death experience in which he had a vision of seven islands emerging out of the ocean. The seven islands became seven mountains, and the voice of God spoke to him, saying, "Those are seven world kingdoms that shape the world." God told the between-death-and-life man that one particular mountain was "the government mountain, and you are called to go into it." After all this, the man's spirit returned to his body, and he went on to be elected to the Georgia state legislature.¹⁵

So Wallnau took the seven-spheres Cunningham-and-Bright list from 1975, combined it with the "seven mountains" near-death-experience vision, and the Seven Mountain Mandate was born. He would also later acknowledge, like Cindy Jacobs, that these ideas of discipling or transforming nations resonated for him because of the Latter Rain theology in which he was already steeped. Almost as soon as he assembled these ideas, Wallnau began teaching and lecturing about this concept, using his Lance Wallnau Ministries platform to start spreading this framework.

Like many Independent Charismatic leaders, Wallnau was not so much creating something new but rather repackaging older ideas. Yet there is a significant if subtle shift in rhetoric between the spheres

imagery that Cunningham and Bright used and the mountains image that Wallnau brought. To be sure, Cunningham taught Christians to strategically move into the “spheres of influence” by pursuing careers in media, the arts, government, and the other spheres. He encouraged Christians to try to bring Christian leadership to those different sectors of society. Yet it remained, implicitly, a grassroots approach to cultural change, with influence growing as more and more Christians bore witness to their faith in each sphere.

Wallnau’s mountain imagery, on the other hand, brought with it a whole new provocation to conquest and strategy for battle. Who will conquer and hold the *top* of each mountain of culture? Who will govern from the high places? As Wallnau once put it, “There are a remnant of people at the top of each sphere who control power over 90 percent of the influence that happens in their sphere. These people are called ‘kings.’ Jesus says the gospel goes to kings. For some reason, the church focuses on taking the gospel only to the poor and completely forgets about taking it to rulers and world authorities. . . . The key here, if you can capture the high places, you can shape a culture.”¹⁶ If Cunningham imagined transformation from below, growing up through the grassroots, Wallnau proclaimed the need for Christians to assert control of society in a top-down, vanguard maneuver.

To understand how Lance Wallnau took up this idea of the Seven Mountains and made a new career out of it, we have to think about how ideas and theology move around in the Independent Charismatic world. As we saw in [chapter 1](#), this decentralized fourth-quadrant landscape is distinct and has its own media, culture, and ethos. In most traditional forms of Christianity, theology is passed on or developed either through systematic scholarly reflection (*systematic* theology) or through denominational and confessional creeds and statements of faith (*creedal* theology). But the Independent Charismatic world is dispersed. What unites people across congregations and ministries are not shared statements of faith but shared experiences (the spiritual gifts) and shared desire for revival.

One of the unifying ideas that also binds this subculture together is the belief that God still speaks through prophecy. So you have all of these different leaders—some, like Cindy Jacobs, who outright call themselves prophets; some who just say they’re “prophetic”; and some who have little prophetic insights or interludes—and they’re all pushing their ideas into the charismatic media marketplace. Most of the prophecies from this cacophony never take hold, and some are so vague (“It’s going to be a year of prosperity” or “God has a special work for you to do”) that they can be neither proven nor refuted. But a select few prophecies or prophetic images become iconic and supremely influential. These classics get picked up by different prophets and other charismatic media figures, who then riff on them, elaborate them, and repackage them.

I call these celebrated, durable prophecies *prophetic memes*. These prophecies are like internet memes in that they keep getting repurposed and utilized in different ways, but they're also theological and ostensibly revelatory, given by God to the prophets. They aren't quite what we would call theological doctrines, in a "statement of faith" sense, but they come close in terms of importance.

For instance, one of the Kansas City Prophets named Bob Jones (not to be confused with Bob Jones University) created a major prophetic meme in the 1980s called the "billion-soul harvest." It promises that in some fast-approaching future, a revival will break out that will lead one billion people to convert to charismatic Christianity. This "billion-soul harvest" language resurfaces anytime there's a new revival, and it's frequently paired with another popular prophecy about a global Third Great Awakening. Huge swaths of people across the charismatic world believe in various prophetic memes so that the memes become part of the assumed vocabulary and culture even though they might have very little grounding in the Bible or traditional Christian theology.

The Seven Mountain Mandate is one of the most important prophetic memes in all of global Independent Charismatic Christianity today. It has become the organizing structure for how millions of Christians think about politics and the relationship between the church and the world. If you attend Christian nationalist gatherings or listen to Christian political podcasts, you'll hear perpetual talk of the Seven Mountains: strategies for taking the government mountain, how to conquer the education mountain, and on and on.

If you are hearing about the Seven Mountains for the first time as you read this, you may be especially shocked by the facts to come. Sociologist of religion Paul Djupe conducted a survey in March 2023 to see how many Americans believe in modern-day prophecy. In the survey, he included a question about the Seven Mountains. Respondents were asked if they agree or disagree with the statement "God wants Christians to stand atop the '7 mountains of society,' including the government, education, media, and others." Note the very specific phrasing, which includes Wallnau's mountain metaphor, rather than vague language about Christians influencing society.

In Djupe's survey, 20.4 percent of all respondents—from a sample of all Americans, not just Christians—either "strongly agree" or "agree" with this statement.¹⁷ Even more revealing is the fact that among the survey respondents who said they believe in modern-day prophecy ("Modern-day prophets continue to reveal God's plans to humanity"), fully two-thirds agree with the Seven Mountain Mandate.¹⁸

Pause for a moment to let this sink in. In 2000, Lance Wallnau heard Cunningham's story, blended it with a dubious near-death experience report, and created a charismatic prophetic meme. Today, *more*

than one-fifth of all Americans recognize and endorse that concept. And among prophecy believers, which undoubtedly includes most Independent Charismatics, along with other charismatic-leaning Christians, two-thirds share Wallnau's vision of Christians conquering the high places in society.

So how did an idea—albeit a sticky and prophetically amplified one—move from something being taught by an obscure Rhode Island pastor to become a core political theology for millions of modern Christians? Perhaps unsurprisingly, C. Peter Wagner reenters the story here.

A Meeting of the Minds

It was in 2001, just about a year after Wallnau began teaching about the Seven Mountains, that C. Peter Wagner heard Wallnau speak at a prophecy conference. As a practiced navigator of the Independent Charismatic world by then, Wagner had a good ear for solid, catchy prophetic memes, and he recognized that Wallnau was in possession of one. Wagner would eventually call Wallnau “one of the most creative thinkers in the church today.”¹⁹ And Wallnau would later say that Peter Wagner “is probably the first father I had in the Spirit,” paying tribute to the man who celebrated and championed Wallnau's own originality.²⁰

Most of the members of Wagner's inner circle—people like Cindy Jacobs, Ché Ahn, Chuck Pierce, Becca Greenwood, and Dutch Sheets—had long-running ties to Wagner, often going back to the 1980s or 1990s. Wallnau was the exception. He had previously been appreciative of Peter Wagner and his teachings on prayer and spiritual warfare, but they only met in 2001.

The encounter between Wagner and Wallnau was a true meeting of the minds, and Wagner would later openly talk with others about his strategy for “drawing Lance more closely into our circles.”²¹ He invited Wallnau to bring his Seven Mountains teaching to the ICA, where it was enthusiastically received by the group. Wallnau would officially join the ICA in 2004. Wagner would also cultivate a mentoring relationship with Wallnau, eventually inviting him into EVAT, the molten core of the NAR, around 2007. But, relatively speaking, Wallnau was a late arrival to the NAR.

As they had for Ché Ahn, Wagner's NAR programs and networks would prove to be the launching pad that Wallnau needed to become one of the top charismatic personalities in the world today. Cindy Jacobs rose to prominence through her preternatural prophecies. Ché Ahn ascended through building his HIM network. Lance's rise had everything to do with the Seven Mountains idea. “There are people who, once they have an idea, for better or for worse, everybody's gonna get it,” Wallnau eulogized Wagner after his death. “So what Peter did was he endorsed an idea, that, I'm convinced, gave that whole Seven Mountains thing legs that went global, because then Dutch Sheets would say it and then Cindy Jacobs

would say it, Chuck [Pierce] would endorse it. . . . Everybody that was in alignment with [Peter] would go with it, pretty much. So everywhere I went, I heard about it.”²²

The NAR networks, touching tens of thousands of churches and ministries at that point, took Wallnau’s prophetic meme and spread it all over the Independent Charismatic world. And I do mean “world” quite literally. Today you’ll find the Seven Mountains concept talked about and cherished in charismatic communities all around the globe.

Peter Wagner was extremely fond of the concept of paradigm shifts, and, in his memoir, he describes at least fifteen discrete paradigm shifts he personally underwent, including key pivot points we’ve observed in his biography like his embrace of church growth theory, his rejection of cessationism through his partnership with John Wimber, his move into strategic-level spiritual warfare, and his migration toward apostolic and prophetic governance for the church. So we should not take it lightly when Wagner describes the changes in his own thinking after meeting Wallnau in 2001 as “what I now consider to be the most radical and potentially world-changing paradigm shift of all.”²³

Wagner’s meeting with and patronage of Wallnau developed around the same time that Wagner was beginning to embrace the Reconstructionist-originated ideas of *dominion theology*. Dominion theology is an assertive vision of Christianity, forecasting Christians taking over whole societies from the control of the devil and structuring society around Christian values and theology. As I noted in [chapter 2](#), these dominion theology, or Kingdom Now, ideas had been circulating around Independent Charismatic networks and cross-pollinating with the Latter Rain prophecies for at least a couple of decades before the NAR got off the ground, and some of Wagner’s disciples, particularly Dutch Sheets, Bill Hamon, and Cindy Jacobs, seem to have adopted them before meeting Wagner. But Wagner, as a newcomer to the Independent Charismatic scene, was slow to embrace these dominion ideas. He would even write in his notes from a 2003 meeting with some of his NAR mentees and EVAT members, “I need help on ‘dominion theology.’ Concepts. Criticisms. Sources.”²⁴ Wagner clearly wanted to get his theological bearings before wholeheartedly embracing these ideas.

Part of Wagner’s hang-up about dominion theology was that he was a perennial pragmatist, and he seems to have struggled to know what the practical application of a charismatic dominion theology would even look like. Lance Wallnau’s Seven Mountains framework solved this problem for Wagner, offering a fairly detailed program for how the church should go about systematically conquering and “discipling” different sectors of society.

Observe the many synchronicities between Wallnau’s Seven Mountains concept and this dominion style of interpretation: in both cases, Christians are divinely mandated to take back control, or dominion, over all creation and all society from Satan. In both cases, there is spiritual warfare as well as very

concrete, real-life competition between the forces of darkness and the forces of light to enact God's kingdom on the earth. In both cases, there is an assumed top-down dimension of governance. For Wagner, the Seven Mountain Mandate became the accessible, detailed program for how to implement dominion theology. As Wagner once put it:

So, once we have a mindset for taking dominion and discipling whole nations and reforming our society. . . . We're ready for action. . . .

Fortunately God, here in the Second Apostolic Age, has brought Lance Wallnau. And Lance Wallnau was the one who began to teach us and popularize a way to simplify this, and Lance Wallnau says that society is controlled by Seven Mountains. And that helps us all, because as soon as we look at these Seven Mountains, we can see where we fit. And then, when we know where we fit, we can begin to transform society.²⁵

What you see happening around the mid-2000s in the NAR leadership circles is an elaborate programmatic and theological entwining of charismatic dominion theology and Wallnau's more digestible and memorable Seven Mountains concept, all toward the ends of strategizing for global Christian supremacy.

The Seven Mountains Everywhere

In late 2007 and early 2008 came a very intentional public rollout of these Seven Mountains and dominion theology ideas, which had already been incubating inside NAR circles for years. In his December 2007 address to the ICA, Wagner spoke rapturously about the dominion-Seven Mountains "paradigm shift," saying, "Our apostolic movement is entering a new season that many of our older apostles could not have imagined. Rather than 'building our own kingdom' as critics might say, today's apostles are intent on building the kingdom of God, and many are willing to take whatever steps, radical as they may be, to help make that happen."²⁶

In the same address, Wagner touted the publication of nine new NAR-authored books about these ideas all published within the space of about a year, including Cindy Jacobs's *The Reformation Manifesto* and Becca Greenwood's *Destined to Rule*. Likewise, Wagner highlights that Johnny Enlow, a prophet-pastor who was close to Wallnau and Ché Ahn, was on the cusp of publishing the first book explicitly about the Seven Mountains concept, titled *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*. A month later in January 2008, Wagner released *Dominion! How Kingdom Action Can Change the World*, in which he cheerfully espoused an undisguised form of dominion theology, linked it with his apostolic-and-prophetic and

strategic-level spiritual warfare frameworks, and bound it all together with Wallnau's Seven Mountain Mandate.

Wagner and Wallnau were so mutually influential that, at times, it can be difficult to discern what is original to Wallnau and what came in through Wagner. Consider this rousing memo that Lance Wallnau wrote to his fellow apostles in 2008 shortly after the "apostolic alignment" ceremony with Todd Bentley at the Lakeland Outpouring and before the major scandals about Bentley broke in the news:

We now come into this era of the Apostolic. The apostolic is all about a final governing presence in the body of Christ. . . . In other words, the Apostolic is a colonizing force that reproduces the culture of a conquering kingdom.

So Jesus is the Apostle who comes from heaven to colonize earth with heaven . . .

There are 7 spheres that shape nations, 7 realms that control the minds of the multitudes. . . . The Apostolic assignment is to take those spheres, and bring them under the dominion of the Embassy of Heaven, the Kingdom of God.

My encouragement to you is grab everything. Park yourself in the anointing, go in the flow with God, get filled with the Spirit of God, but let God take this glory to where it's never been. Take it to the top of the mountains, because that's an apostolic assignment that will bring Jesus' inheritance into the earth.²⁷

This is a neat encapsulation of how entwined the NAR, Seven Mountains, and dominion theology had become: with the advent of modern-day apostles, Christianity is primed to truly colonize the earth with heavenly culture by conquering the tops of the Seven Mountains in every society. As these ideas percolated through the NAR networks and beyond, you can see an accompanying politicization of those networks.

Even in Wagner's already quite radicalized circles—where strategic-level spiritual warfare and the spiritual oligarchy of apostles and prophets were *de rigueur*—these Seven Mountains ideas proved contentious. Some leaders in the ICA and the other NAR institutions started pushing back when it came to dominion theology. One apostle and longtime ally of Wagner withdrew from the ICA and WLI, writing in a long letter to Wagner, "I became disquieted at the time when you platformed and affirmed as your own belief in the dominion based eschatology."²⁸

A lot of leaders were on board with the idea of church networks being led by apostles and prophets, but a program aimed at world domination gave them pause. The inner core of Wagner's followers, however, especially his EVAT group, embraced this new, colonizing, dominion modality.

Not by happenstance, this campaign to spread the Seven Mountains framework coincided with an unprecedented political opportunity for the NAR. In August 2008, John McCain, the Republican nominee for president, plucked a folksy and charismatic, in both senses of the word, Alaskan governor named Sarah Palin out of obscurity to be his vice-presidential running mate. Palin, who was baptized as a child at the Wasilla Assembly of God, a Pentecostal megachurch, had spent more than two decades stewing in Independent Charismatic and NAR teachings. The Toronto Blessing had swept through one of her churches, and Palin belonged to a "spiritual warfare network" created by Mary Glazier, a member of Cindy Jacobs's ACPE. Glazier claimed that she had helped inspire Palin's entry into local politics.²⁹ From Peter Wagner and other NAR leaders' perspectives, someone who evidently shared their aggressive theology and looked to the apostles and prophets for leadership was on the cusp of being elevated to one of the highest offices in the land.

Of course, McCain and Palin lost that election to Barack Obama and Joe Biden, but the 2008 election still gave the NAR leaders a taste of partisan politics and ensconced many of them in right-wing Christian activist circles. Wagner would again address the ICA a month after the election, where he said, "I have never experienced a personal emotional moment attached to politics that matched listening to Palin's nomination and her acceptance speech. I felt that it was a nudge from the Holy Spirit."³⁰ He urged his fellow apostles not to be discouraged but to remain hopeful: "We will see our cities and our nation transformed if we accelerate our commitment to be Holy Spirit driven revolutionaries!"³¹

Wallnau, for his part, rode the wave of NAR enthusiasm for his ideas all the way to charismatic stardom. He took his Seven Mountains schtick to every megachurch, apostolic gathering, and charismatic conference that would have him. Wallnau's presentations have a real motivational speaker vibe, with Wallnau almost always using a whiteboard or large sheet of paper to draw the Seven Mountains and illustrate his ideas. While he was still technically pastoring the little church in Rhode Island, his nonprofit, Lance Wallnau Ministries, jumped from an income of \$131,000 in 2004 to \$955,000 in 2008, driven largely by Wallnau's speaking fees, conference honoraria, and CD sales.³² Shortly thereafter, he officially left his Rhode Island church, moved to Texas, began casting himself as a business consultant, and took to speaking and teaching full time.

In the span from 2008 to 2015, Wallnau became a household name in Independent Charismatic circles. In 2013, he coauthored and coedited a short volume with Bill Johnson—Ché Ahn’s close friend, Revival Alliance partner, and the apostle over Bethel Church in Redding, California—titled *Invading Babylon: The 7 Mountain Mandate*. Peter Wagner and Ché Ahn were also contributors to the book.

The Seven Mountain Mandate was the goldmine prophetic meme that put Lance Wallnau on the map. But it wouldn’t be his last.

Donald Trump and the Cyrus Anointing

It is easy to forget, in retrospect, how controversial Donald Trump was among evangelical Christians in the 2016 campaign. There were seventeen candidates at the height of the Republican primary, and a number of them—Ben Carson, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, Rick Perry, and Mike Huckabee—had personal evangelical bona fides and were popular with and respected by evangelical elites.

Donald Trump was different. After he announced his presidential bid in June 2015, he cursed and cussed, he stumbled over his Bible references, he said he didn’t ask God for forgiveness, and he couldn’t name his favorite Bible verse. All of these signals were read by elite evangelicals and by educated analysts of evangelicalism as being antithetical to avowed evangelical piety and values. So the elite evangelicals, particularly those from the noncharismatic first and second quadrants, excoriated Trump, ignored him, or publicly supported the other Republican candidates.

Yet polls kept showing that a plurality of evangelical voters were gravitating toward Trump. For sure, when you have such a divided field, some of those pluralities were very low, such as a poll in July 2015, a month after he entered the race, that showed Trump leading the field among white evangelical voters but still only getting support from 20 percent of them.³³ It was this dynamic—Trump’s burgeoning popularity with grassroots evangelicals and his vileness to evangelical elites—that drove the ongoing befuddlement of the mainstream evangelical media (like *Christianity Today*) and the secular media. These dynamics also governed which evangelical leaders met with or endorsed Trump early on.

Anthea Butler, a scholar and sharp observer of evangelical politics, summed it up well: “Trump went to what I laughingly referred to . . . as the D-list. He went to prosperity gospel people. He went to lower-named Pentecostal preachers. He went to charismatics who were outside of any denominational construct. And he brought all of those people together.”³⁴ Among those “D-list” charismatics living “outside of any denominational construct” was one Lance Wallnau.

In September 2015, Lance received an invitation to meet with Trump at Trump Tower, at one of the meetings convened by Paula White, along with a group of televangelists, prophets, apostles, and a

messianic rabbi. The story goes that Wallnau attended as an observer, mostly out of curiosity. He did not plan to support Trump, thinking he'd probably endorse one of the more evangelical candidates. But Lance says that God spoke to him during the meeting to say, "Donald Trump is a wrecking ball to the spirit of political correctness." After the gathering, when Wallnau returned home, he also heard God say, "Trump is a Cyrus."³⁵

This image of Cyrus—or the "Cyrus Anointing," as Wallnau sometimes phrases it—would become a central pillar of Christian Trumpism. When the Jewish people were conquered by the Babylonian Empire in the sixth century BCE and taken away to exile in Babylon, their deliverance came through a messiah (the term *messiah/mashiach* is Hebrew for "anointed one") in the person of the Persian emperor, Cyrus. Cyrus conquered the Babylonians, and he was the one who sent the Jewish leaders back to rebuild Jerusalem. Wallnau anchored his new Trumpian prophetic meme in Isaiah 45. Here's Wallnau's interpretation of the passage:

The Lord took me to Isaiah 45 and he said, "The next president will be the 45th president, I want an Isaiah 45 Cyrus" . . . Cyrus was prophesied in Isaiah 45 one hundred years before he was born. The prophet Isaiah called by name the political leader who would go into Babylon, who would literally, overnight, take occupation of Babylon, and who would decree freedom for the Jewish people, with this audacious statement, "I've anointed him; I'm going to break open the gates; and he doesn't know me." This is Isaiah 45. So I said, "Wait a second. God anoints political leaders, for his purposes, that do not know him?"³⁶

To play out Wallnau's analogy, the ancient Jewish people were in exile in Babylon, and conservative Christians in 2016 were in cultural exile in the United States. God anointed Cyrus, the Persian emperor, to conquer the Babylonians and send the Jews back from exile. For Wallnau, Donald Trump is the Cyrus, the heathen warrior king, who will come in and beat up conservative Christians' enemies and send evangelicals back from exile. In their second meeting at Trump Tower that fall—once again with a group of D-list evangelical leaders—Wallnau shared this prophecy directly with Trump. "Here's what the Lord told me about you. Isaiah 45 talks about 'Cyrus, my anointed,'" Wallnau says he told Trump. "Now Mr. Trump, I know and you know that you're not really an 'evangelical,' but the Bible says that 'though [Cyrus] know me not,' God's got his hand on him."³⁷

What sense did Donald Trump make of these wild prophetic associations and scripture references that were almost certainly beyond his level of biblical literacy? We can only guess. This was only one of the first of many instances of a Pentecostal or charismatic prophet speaking words of prophecy over Trump. He has always seemed game to hear and absorb another positive revelatory image of himself.

Whether you attribute Wallnau's insights to his shrewd instincts or to prophecy is likely a matter of theology. But in any case, what Wallnau intuited and touted in the fall of 2015, even as most evangelical elites were irked and outraged by Trump, was that the masses of American evangelicals was not looking for a pious evangelical statesman. They wanted a bare-knuckled brawler. Wallnau had a theological worldview and a skill at packaging messages that were ready-made to underwrite a figure like Trump.

Wagner, Wallnau, and Trump

Wallnau became one of the first evangelical leaders to openly endorse Donald Trump, and he did it using this new wrecking-ball “Trump as Cyrus” prophetic meme. For several months, through early 2016, Wallnau was one of the few Christian leaders making a positive, “biblical” case for supporting Trump over and against the other dyed-in-the-wool evangelical candidates. At a time when most evangelical elites were exceedingly wary of the insurgent Trump campaign, Wallnau came forward with a Bible reference and a prophecy that resonated deeply with the pro-Trump evangelical grassroots.

Marvin Olasky, a noncharismatic evangelical leader and editor of *World* magazine, a smaller parallel publication to *Christianity Today*, would later tell the story of how, when he made a principled, evangelical, biblical case that Trump was “unfit to be president” in October 2016, he received an unprecedented number of letters from readers—some two thousand letters. According to Olasky, 80 percent of the letters were angry and argumentative, and one rationale he heard across the board was this analogy between Trump and Cyrus.³⁸

The “Trump as Cyrus” meme synchronizes handily with Wallnau's Seven Mountains teaching. In Wallnau and Wagner's understanding, the government was a different mountain than the religion mountain, so they needed an anointed *government* leader, not a pastor—to conquer that mountain. To borrow a Freudian analogy, while most evangelical elites were following their superego, eschewing the uncouth Trump for his moral deficiencies, Wallnau used prophecy and the Bible to indulge the evangelical id. He was saying, in essence, “Trump may be a bastard, but he can be *our* bastard.” He cloaked his realpolitik reasoning in the Seven Mountains and this Cyrus Anointing idea.

Throughout the 2016 Republican primary, Wallnau took a lot of heat, particularly from evangelicals, because nonevangelicals would probably not have heard of Wallnau—for being one of the foremost Trumpian Christian voices. And even though Peter Wagner was dying at the time, as we've seen, he actually decided to leap into the fray to defend his mentee. I noted in [chapter 2](#) how, in February 2016, Wagner posted on Facebook his own endorsement of Donald Trump. Now, with the background of these prophetic memes, let me share the core reasoning of that post. Here's what Wagner also wrote:

God is not limited to using Christians to accomplish His purposes. We need only to recall Cyrus, the idolatrous king of Persia, whom God used to help get His people back to Jerusalem.

...

Let me point out that influence is related to spirituality in the Religion Mountain, but this is not true in any of the other six mountains that are the molders of culture. The chief producer [of] influence in the six non-Religion mountains is not spirituality but success. The most successful people are the most influential. Success? In the Business Mountain and the Media Mountain Trump has accumulated 8–10 billion dollars. He knows how to influence. I want to vote for a commander-in-chief, not a bishop-in-chief.³⁹

Wagner's endorsement was almost entirely premised on Wallnau's theology. After Wagner's Facebook post, the other EVAT leaders, like Cindy Jacobs and Ché Ahn, jumped on board the Trump bandwagon. Becca Greenwood told me that the EVAT members were pretty divided at the time over which 2016 Republican candidate to support but that Wagner's endorsement helped to galvanize the EVAT circle around Trump because they believed that "Peter had the ability to see things apostolically ahead of time."⁴⁰ From that moment forward, the leaders of the NAR have been the tip of the spear of Christian Trumpism.

Sometimes journalists or other analysts of the NAR say that the Seven Mountains framework is "theocratic" or that it's about creating a "theocracy." That's not precisely true. In the common understanding of theocracy, priests or other clergy or clerics rule over a society or community in the name of God. Part of the Seven Mountains concept, as Wallnau and Wagner articulate it, is that each mountain (each segment of society) has its own culture and rules, so you have to play by the rules of that mountain if you want to conquer it. A religious leader, a priest, or even a Christian apostle or prophet might not have the skill set to take over the government mountain or the business mountain. Similarly, voters or political consultants shouldn't try to import "religion mountain" rules—such as ethics and expectations for moral righteousness—into the conquest of the government mountain.

In the Seven Mountains frame, a leader in one of the nonreligion mountains doesn't have to be pious or even necessarily religious to govern according to the kingdom of God. They just have to exert their power in conformity with Christians' (here, conservative charismatic Christians') interests. Of course, this means that the Seven Mountains prophetic meme was a political theology ready-made for someone like Donald Trump. Trump is big on dominion and being domineering, on winning. Trump is clearly not a devout Christian, by any conventional definition—Wallnau says he told Trump, "You're not really an 'evangelical,'" and he would openly question whether Trump was a Christian at all. But Trump was

willing to govern according to the desires of conservative Christians. Calling Trump a Cyrus implicitly acknowledges that his approach to power and governing mentality are not *Christian* in any ethical or moral sense. But from Wagner and Wallnau's perspective, Trump had already succeeded in dominating—"conquered," so to speak—two of the other Seven Mountains: business and media. So why not make him the champion of the government mountain too?

Wallnau and Wagner promoted and leveraged these two prophetic memes—the Cyrus Anointing and the Seven Mountain Mandate—to consolidate charismatic support, and eventual broader evangelical support, around Donald Trump in 2016. If you go into charismatic circles and listen to how people talk about Trump, these two memes will come up over and over and over again. Many different factions from a lot of different segments of American Christianity have glommed on to Christian Trumpism, but charismatic support for Donald Trump is premised on these two pillars: the Cyrus Anointing and the Seven Mountains. They both can be traced back to Lance Wallnau, with a notable assist from Peter Wagner.

The Prophet Pundits of *FlashPoint*

From the point of his endorsement of Donald Trump all the way up to the present, Lance Wallnau has been one of the leading Christian proponents—and propagandists—of Trumpism. At the end of September 2016, Wallnau self-published a book, *God's Chaos Candidate: Donald J. Trump and the American Unraveling*, where he lays out his pro-Trump Seven Mountains and Cyrus Anointing memes at length.

About a week after *God's Chaos Candidate* was published, the *Access Hollywood* October surprise hit the news, with Donald Trump claiming blithely on video that he could "grab [women] by the pussy" with no consequences. This was a crisis for Lance Wallnau, who had made himself the prophetic face of Christian Trump support.

Wallnau, ever the cagey operator, grabbed his cell phone and recorded an impromptu Facebook video, where he passionately argued that God had not left Trump: "This isn't God exposing something. This is the devil strategically exposing information in order to destroy a candidate," Wallnau told his followers. "God can do more with Samson than he can do with Jezebel. God could do more with a carnal prophet. God could anoint the jawbone of an ass and slay his enemies, better than he could anoint Jezebel to advance his prophetic agenda."⁴¹

Once again, riffing on the Samson and Jezebel stories, Wallnau was constructing a commentary that existed in the space between a prophecy and a biblical principle to uphold his ongoing Trump support.

This is the real brilliance of Wallnau's propaganda: for charismatic evangelicals, who prize prophecy and prophetic illuminations of scripture, Wallnau's claims to oracular authority and insight into the spirit realm create a sense that God has a special hand on Trump. Yet the Bible references and biblical imagery also speak to more mainstream evangelicals, who might not buy in to all the prophecy business but are looking for "biblical" reasons to support Trump. This crossover appeal—to those both inside and outside of the more narrow charismatic niche—has helped skyrocket Wallnau to even greater fame and prominence.

Throughout the Trump era, Wallnau perfected the art of hot-take Facebook Live rants, where he comments on the day's news and mixes in his own prophetic insights. A lot of these insights are still based on the Seven Mountains and the Cyrus Anointing memes. But Wallnau is very creative, and he has operated as an ad hoc generator of new prophetic memes regarding Donald Trump. Within the charismatic media sphere, Wallnau, who was already popular before Trump, has become the go-to Trump defender and commentator. Many people scoff at Lance Wallnau, labeling him a crazy right-wing preacher or prophet-pundit. But we write him off as a fringe voice at our own peril.

Like Cindy Jacobs, Wallnau was also heavily involved in the POTUS Shield spiritual warfare gatherings in Washington, DC, in January 2017. That same month, at a conference of NAR leaders at Chuck Pierce's church, Wallnau offered a new prophecy referencing their recently deceased mentor Wagner. He verbally imagined a future in which his and Peter's vision of the Seven Mountains would take over huge slices of American Christianity and where prophets could develop whole YouTube channels to provide an alternative to secular news media, which he alludes to being dominated by a demonic spirit called Leviathan:

So here's what I think Peter would say today, and to those of you who love his legacy, I'd encourage you to think about this. I think he'd say the 7M model is more important than ever before, because the nature of the power of media and Hollywood upstream to shape popular culture. Jon Stewart did more to disciple millennials and then Bernie Sanders came along and cleaned it up. It's popular culture on television and in comedy and in news especially that Christians are going to have to go into.

And I can virtually prophesy—and, Chuck, I encourage you to help me pray into this—I think we could have YouTube channels that do our own version of commentary on what's happening, and because we are such a large body, it will go viral through the internet channels, even though it won't be honored by MSNBC or CNN, and there'll be millions of views on witty, anointed, prophetic commentary, exposing the soft underbelly of Leviathan.⁴²

Through his own Facebook Live rants and punditry, Wallnau spent the four years of the Trump presidency living into that prophecy, actively propagandizing his fellow Christians through viral videos and prophetic memes.

As the 2020 election ramped up, Wallnau energetically campaigned for Trump. He traveled through the swing states with his close friend Ché Ahn to urge every pastor and Christian to openly advocate for Trump. He told audiences that for the brief window of the Trump administration, Christians had controlled the tops of some of the Seven Mountains. God only knew what would happen if Biden became president.

Then, in the fall of 2020, just weeks before the election, Wallnau's prophecy about a prophetic commentary YouTube channel from January 2017 would come to fulfillment. Kenneth Copeland, one of the old lions of the Word of Faith-prosperity gospel movement, had a Christian television channel called Victory Channel, and that fall he launched a new political commentary show called *FlashPoint*. Broadcast on Copeland's Victory Channel and also posted on YouTube, *FlashPoint* adopted the slogan "Where Politics and Prophecy Align."⁴³ Most of the people who were invited on as commentators also cast themselves as prophets. *FlashPoint* was an unwavering, pro-Trump, Big Lie, conspiracy-spreading religious broadcast through the period between the 2020 election and January 6. And the forerunner—the leading voice on *FlashPoint*—was, of course, Lance Wallnau.

What little numerical data is available about *FlashPoint* in this era shows a staggeringly rapid adoption of this charismatic prophecy show. While they don't break out the numbers show by show, Victory Channel had virtually no YouTube presence before *FlashPoint* launched in late September 2020. That month, Victory Channel videos received 56,000 views on YouTube. In October, it was 152,000 views. In November, 1.4 million views. In December 2020, 6.1 million views. And by January 2021, the month of the insurrection, they received 32.4 million views on YouTube.⁴⁴ These numbers are mirrored in what you see on social media in the same time period: *FlashPoint* flooded the charismatic media space in the lead-up to January 6.

And it's still going strong. If you suspect that my characterizations of *FlashPoint* or of Wallnau and his peers' commentary are hyperbole or caricature, I would encourage you to watch any episode of *FlashPoint*. There you will discover the epicenter of prophetic Christian Trumpism and charismatic Christian nationalism today. If you do hazard entry, be prepared to experience a topsy-turvy world where down is up, where Christians are simultaneously imperiously persecuted and gloriously triumphant, where prophetic memes replace actual news reporting, where right-wing politicians mingle with charismatic prophets. *FlashPoint* is Lance Wallnau's worldview and ambition made manifest.

What Lance Did on January 6

Throughout that season, between the November 2020 election and January 6, 2021, Wallnau delivered nearly daily rants on Facebook, his podcast, *FlashPoint*, or any other venue that would have him. Like Cindy Jacobs, Lance Wallnau was one of the speakers at the December 12, 2020, Jericho March event on the National Mall. Unlike Jacobs, Wallnau actually attended in person. “You are the privileged generation that is called to endure the contradiction along with Donald Trump and see America restored,” he told the crowd. “This is not a weak movement. This is the beginning of a Christian populist uprising! There is a backlash coming. We are going to continue to build this as a groundswell from now till 2022. You will be on the news; they will not be able to ignore you. . . . There is a Great Awakening coming! This is the spark that is starting it right now!”⁴⁵

I have sorted through hundreds of social media profiles of Christians who were present for the riots and protests at the US Capitol on January 6. Strikingly, a common denominator you can find across many of those accounts are clips of Wallnau’s Facebook Live rants and links to episodes of *FlashPoint*. If we are looking for the key mobilizers that got Christians enraged and activated enough to drive or fly, sometimes cross-country, to the US Capitol on January 6, we have to look at Lance Wallnau and his *FlashPoint* platform, two of the most important and influential conduits of that mobilization.

With the popular fixation on Donald Trump’s speech at the rally on the Ellipse on January 6, it’s easy to forget that it was only one of three rallies that Stop the Steal organizers had planned. The first major rally was the one on January 5—the Rally to Revival—at which Ché Ahn spoke. Trump’s Ellipse “fight like hell” rally was the second. The third rally event was planned for 1:00 p.m. on January 6 at the Capitol itself. Evidently, the organizers of the Stop the Steal election denial campaign anticipated that the real action would be at the Capitol that day, and they had strategized to put maximum pressure on the lawmakers then meeting inside the Capitol Building by staging another rally just outside.

This third event, at the Capitol, had to be canceled because of the rioting that broke out. Yet the list of planned speakers at the event is revealing. It’s a veritable who’s who of up-and-coming Christian nationalist politicians and activists, including political schemer Roger Stone, Pennsylvania state senator and then-future gubernatorial candidate Doug Mastriano, Representative Lauren Boebert, Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene, and, naturally, Lance Wallnau.

On the morning of January 6, 2021, inside his Trump International Hotel room, Lance bundled up against the cold and headed out to the Ellipse to see Donald Trump’s speech. He posted a picture of himself on social media giving a thumbs up near the stage.

When that rally was over, Lance made his way across the National Mall with the throngs of angry rioters. He was ready to rile up the crowd even further at the afternoon rally, eager to keep the crowd at a low boil of rage. But it turned out Lance's further services weren't needed; the pot had already boiled over, and Trump supporters were rioting at the Capitol. So Lance watched the protests and furor for a bit and then headed back to his hotel room.

That evening, he would broadcast live as a panelist on a special one-and-a-half-hour edition of *FlashPoint*. Predictably, he spoke about the Seven Mountains and the need for Christians to rise to "the top of the sphere of influence that they're in and not being ashamed of the gospel." But amid debriefing the violence and chaos everyone had witnessed, Wallnau went further. "We have to know that the national news cycle is a spirit, is the false prophets of Baal. They're trying to make today's incidents in the Capitol something which is attached to us," he said on *FlashPoint*. "The devil will have his media. We may not be able to turn around corrupt media, but we can create another narrative by our presence and our power that plants the gospel in cities and in communities and in territories, where it contradicts the deception that is in the land."⁴⁶

Lance Wallnau, chief Christian propagandist of the MAGA movement, has been steadfast in advancing that narrative ever since: Christians are the embattled and beleaguered cultural exiles *and* a populist force to be reckoned with. Christians are the real Americans and the destined leaders at the tops of all the mountains of influence.

If we want to know what implementing this Seven Mountains blueprint in a pluralistic democracy looks like, look at what its proponents did in the crucible of the 2020 election and its aftermath. That was a moment of supreme crisis and opportunity, from their perspective.

Ché Ahn has been an outspoken enthusiast of the Seven Mountains framework since it first entered the NAR bloodstream in the mid-2000s. He contributed a chapter to Lance Wallnau and Bill Johnson's Seven Mountains book. In late November 2020, as all this battling over the election results was going on, Ché posted on Instagram, "There's no separation of church and state. God's kingdom involves all the 7 Mountains of Influence."⁴⁷

Johnny Enlow, a close prophet associate of Wallnau's and a longtime leader in Ché Ahn's HIM apostolic network, was the first to write a book on the Seven Mountains. In the aftermath of the election, Enlow would argue that anyone opposing Trump's attempt to hijack the election was guilty of "treason" and that such traitors were legally "executable" by Trump.⁴⁸ Other key Seven Mountains proponents, like Cindy Jacobs and Becca Greenwood, were there at the Capitol, leading spiritual warfare to keep Trump in office.

And, of course, there's Lance Wallnau, Mr. Seven Mountains himself. Wallnau took Loren Cunningham and Bill Bright's dreams, branded them with the imagery of mountains, brought these ideas into Peter Wagner's inner circle, and became the paramount exponent of the 7M prophetic meme for twenty years and counting. No Christian leader has done more to personally and theologically bolster the cause of Donald Trump than Lance Wallnau. After the 2020 election, no Christian leader has been a more prominent spokesperson for the Stop the Steal, Big Lie, epistemic discombobulation among evangelical Christians than Lance Wallnau. And of course, he was there, on the site of the Capitol Riot, watching the havoc ensue.

As much as Wallnau and his NAR fellows might proclaim that their battle is with demons, the front lines of opposition they meet is not from cosmic principalities and powers. It is actual people and democratic systems that take the brunt of their aggression. So if we want to know what applying the Seven Mountains concept looks like in a pluralistic democracy—a diverse nation governed by the rule of law, where separation of church and state is enshrined in the constitution—we need look no further than January 6.

The Most Important Evangelical Political Theologian of Our Time

Since the Capitol Riot, Wallnau's star has, if anything, continued to rise. He is now helping run a Colorado Springs-based organization he cofounded in 2017 called the Truth and Liberty Coalition. Truth and Liberty's mission is, forthrightly, "to educate, unify and mobilize believers in Jesus Christ to affect the reformation of nations through the seven mountains of cultural influence."⁴⁹ Their list of influencers and partner organizations are the banner carriers of the new charismatic-power-inflected religious right—a religious right reborn in the Trump era with an Independent Charismatic leadership core. The organization trains Christians on how to run for office and how to strategically engineer takeovers of local city councils and local school boards, which represent the government and education mountains.

Wallnau was invited to campaign on stage with the NAR-aligned Christian nationalist candidate Doug Mastriano in his ill-fated bid for Pennsylvania governor in 2022. He has spoken at the ReAwaken America events led by Michael Flynn. Right-wing politicians like Kari Lake, Marjorie Taylor Greene, Lauren Boebert, and even Donald Trump book appearances on *FlashPoint* to reach the charismatic, prophecy-believing audiences that Wallnau has spent decades galvanizing. And, incredibly, one-fifth of all Americans have embraced his Seven Mountains schema.

Wallnau's career as a pastor, a prophet, a pundit, and a political theologian has been lived in defiance of the buttoned-up evangelical institutions that putatively guide and speak for "evangelicalism." I would

even argue—and I know how controversial this statement will be—that Lance Wallnau is the most important evangelical political theologian of the twenty-first century so far. He will not be gracing the stage at the annual meeting of the academic Evangelical Theological Society anytime soon. As of this writing, *Christianity Today* has mentioned his name only once, and that was slightly mockingly in connection to the failed 2020 Trump prophecies.⁵⁰

But can anyone find a Christian leader more in sync with the id of American evangelicalism than Lance Wallnau? His ideas and his prophetically glossed theology have become the battle anthem of the religious right and MAGA evangelicalism. So if you want to answer the question “Where is American evangelicalism going next?” you can, like many commentators, go on watching the evangelical institutions of power, forged during the twentieth century. You can go on listening to the elites who purport to speak for evangelicalism. I’ll be watching Lance Wallnau.