

Ambassador Mike Huckabee will push for 'end times' in Palestine

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OPINION

"Genocide Joe" was an accurate descriptor for Joe Biden. However, no matter how bad Biden was on Palestine — and he was horrible — early signs are that Donald Trump and his cronies are going to be a million times worse. This is most clearly seen by the appointment of Rev. Mike Huckabee as ambassador to Israel.

Huckabee is a former presidential candidate and governor of Arkansas. But those things are not the problem. The problem is that Huckabee is a Christian Zionist and believes in the "End of Times" prophecy, namely that Jews must be established in a sovereign state of Israel to usher in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. In this theology, Jesus will come again and reign over Israel and the world, and he will create a new age where all will be called to worship Christ. Christ will sit in judgment separating the righteous — believers from nonbelievers. Those who believe will be welcomed into his kingdom and graces, and those who don't will be condemned into Hell and torment.

Mike Huckabee is a Southern Baptist minister. The Southern Baptist Church was founded as a break from the Baptist movement over the issue of slavery in 1845. The Southern Baptist Church on its founding supported slavery and after the Civil War, were ardent supporters of the politics of the "Lost Cause," which included segregation. It wasn't until 1995 that the church formally apologized for its support of slavery. And to right its historical wrongs, in 2017, condemned white supremacy. However, the church recently voted in 2023 to ban women from serving as Pastors in its churches. In 2024, a proposal was put forth to affirm the 2023 decision, but that vote failed narrowly missing the 2/3rds required to pass. Some proponents of the ban suggested that there were already ways to remove churches from its ranks that had women pastors, so the proposal was not necessary. This is relevant because this is the denominational and theological/ideological base of Mike Huckabee, and as a Minister of the Southern Baptist tradition he brings these predilections into public life.

You can sometimes catch Huckabee on late-night or early-morning TV raising funds or engaging in his monologues on the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN). TBN billed Huckabee as "America's favorite front porch" talk show. His show is described as "the hour-long program... a down-home slice of wholesome Americana in all of its patriotic, God-honoring, and family-friendly glory." But what signals his bias towards Is-



rael are his appeals on behalf of the International Fellowship for Christians and Jews (IFCJ) whose agenda is to support Israel, offer assistance to indigent Jews, and assist with Aliyah (financially assisting Jews to make a home in Israel). This fits with his theological agenda of bringing Jews to Israel in fulfillment of his understanding of prophecy where the sovereignty of Israel as a Jewish "homeland" is a prerequisite for the Second Coming of Christ. IFCJ's website reads, "As the war shows no signs of slowing down, many Jewish people are struggling"; "YOU can give hope today with your best gift. Donate to provide food, medicine, and other necessities"; and "I will bless those who bless [Israel]", citing Genesis 12:3.

Huckabee, shortly after the announcement of his ambassadorship to Israel, spoke to Israel's Army radio stating, "Of course," the annexation of the West Bank is a possibility. This is his latest statement in a litany of other problematic statements. As a candidate for president in 2008, Huckabee stated that Palestinian identity was "a political tool to try and force land away from Israel". Huckabee has maintained throughout his years in ministry and public life that the West Bank belongs to Israel, rationalizing it in this way, "the title deed was given by God to Abraham and to his heirs." Furthermore, Huckabee believes that there is no such a thing as a Palestinian — "There really isn't such a thing," he said earlier on



Former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee attends a ceremony marking the construction of a new housing complex in the illegal Israeli settlement of Efrat in the occupied West Bank, on August 1, 2018.
● AMIR COHEN/REUTERS

this year. There is a lot to be concerned with in the appointment of Huckabee as the point person in Israel.

In response to the news of the Huckabee pick, Luis Moreno, a former chief of mission to Israel and former ambassador to Jamaica, wrote on Twitter, "I unfortunately was exposed to him during his visits to Israel back in the day. Full blown (and knowledgeable) fanatic of the End of Times, Apocalypse, Israel's destruction, etc. A true and utter nutcase. Couldn't

be a more dangerous selection." Yet, this is the choice that is before us, and his influence in the Trump administration will not fare well for the Palestinians of Gaza or the West Bank. The fact is that Mike Huckabee is going to go further in advocating for the destruction of Palestine than the Biden administration has, offer justification for stepping up the holocaust in Gaza, and push for the annexation of Gaza and the West Bank. Huckabee obviously believes that God is hate-filled and delights in the murder and genocide of men, women, and children. He believes that God is a homicidal maniac that only wants to have God's agenda addressed as interpreted by those steeped in religious bias and coming from a historical framework of slavery, misogyny, and white supremacy. This pick will make things a million times worse for the cause of a free Palestine.

This means that those of us in the Palestinian Justice Movement must double our efforts of agitation and education. We must push these next four years for Palestinian self-determination and to dismantle the Israeli apartheid system. We must show up and speak out. We must challenge Congress and politicians at the local level to keep Palestine on their lips and in the consciousness of the public. Trump and Huckabee will seek to erase Palestine along with the crimes of the West Bank and Gaza (and now Lebanon), and it is up to us whether they succeed in this erasure or not.

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I'll never forget what Kennedy did during Samoa's measles outbreak

By Brian Deer
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PERSPECTIVE

In November 2019, when an epidemic of measles was killing children and babies in Samoa, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. — who in recent days became Donald Trump's pick to lead the Department of Health and Human Services — sent the prime minister of Samoa a four-page letter. In it, he suggested the measles vaccine itself may have caused the outbreak. He claimed that the vaccine might have "failed to produce antibodies" in vaccinated mothers sufficient to provide infants with immunity, that it perhaps provoked "the evolution of more virulent measles strains" and that children who received the vaccine may have inadvertently spread the virus to other children. "Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance," he added, writing in his role as the chairman of Children's Health Defense, an anti-vaccine group.

At the time of his letter, 16 people, many of them younger than 2, were already reported dead. Measles, which is among the most contagious diseases, can sometimes lead to brain swelling, pneumonia, and death. For months, families grieved over heartbreaking little coffins, until a door-to-door vaccination campaign brought the calamity to a close. The final number of fatalities topped 80.

I was in Samoa during that outbreak as part of my more than 16 years of reporting on the anti-vaccine movement. The cause of the outbreak was not the vaccine, but most likely an infected traveler who brought the virus from New Zealand, which that year had had the biggest measles outbreaks in decades, especially among that country's Indigenous and Pacific Islander communities. Migration and poverty were likely factors in a sudden spread of measles in Samoa and New Zealand. But, as an editorial in *The New Zealand Medical Journal* reported, so too was a factor that Mr. Kennedy specializes in: "increasing circulation of misinformation leading to distrust and reduced vaccination uptake". Samoa's vaccination rates had fallen to fewer than a third of eligible 1-year-olds.

Vaccine skepticism has ballooned worldwide, and Mr. Kennedy and others who back him have encouraged it. Americans may be

well aware that their possible future health leader holds dangerous beliefs about vaccines. The consequences of his views — and those of his orbit — are not merely absurd but tragic.

In my reporting, parents have mentioned fearing vaccines after watching "Vaxxed," a 90-minute documentary, which had also toured countries such as New Zealand. The film, focused on unproven allegations, was released more than three years before the Samoa measles outbreak. Among much else, it claimed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had committed fraud.

Two of the filmmakers — Del Bigtree and Andrew Wakefield — are buddies of Mr. Kennedy. The director, Mr. Wakefield, is a former doctor whose medical license was revoked in his native Britain in 2010 amid charges of ethical violations. One of the producers, Mr. Bigtree, became Mr. Kennedy's presidential campaign communications chief.

In the years before the documentary was released, I revealed, in a series of articles, evidence that Mr. Wakefield's research in the 1990s had been rigged at a London hospital to make it look as if the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine was linked to autism. This research was retracted in 2010. Mr. Kennedy certainly didn't seem fazed by Mr. Wakefield's professional downfall. "In any just society, we would be building statues to Andy Wakefield,"



he yelled, for instance, from a platform he and Mr. Wakefield shared at an event in Washington, D.C., a few days before he sent his letter to Samoa.

Reports say Mr. Kennedy is reviewing résumés for his possible Health and Human Services Department empire. He's reportedly eyeing Dr. Joseph Ladapo, a Florida health official who has questioned the safety of COVID vaccines. I'd say Mr. Bigtree may get a role; Mr. Wakefield is trickier, given how discredited he is, even in the United States. But there are plenty of others in Mr. Kennedy's circle whose claims ought to concern everyone.

Consider Sherri Tenpenny, a doctor who has been declared by Mr. Kennedy as "one of the great leaders" of the anti-vaccine movement. She has falsely

claimed that a "metal" attached to a protein in the COVID shots was making their recipients magnetic. "They can put a key on their forehead and it sticks," she told Ohio state lawmakers in June 2021. "They can put spoons and forks all over them and they can stick." I could pluck plenty more outrageous characters from Mr. Kennedy's circle over the years, including veteran AIDS denialists. In recent days, Mr. Kennedy appears to have tried to change the conversation around his vaccine views to focus on America's junk food diets. But his views on vaccines shouldn't be forgotten. In January 2021, speaking to a gathering of loyalists in Ohio, he outlined a three-point checklist that had to be met for him to consider a COVID vaccine. First, he said, "You take one shot, you



Samoa's then-prime minister Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi (from r) shakes hands with Robert F. Kennedy Jr. before the latter left the country's 2019 Independence celebration.
● MISIONA SIMO/SAMOA OBSERVER

get lifetime immunity." Second, side effects are only "one in a million". Third, "herd immunity" is achieved at 70 percent public uptake — after which, he stipulated, "nobody in this society" ever gets the disease again.

"If they came up with that product," he said, "I'd be happy to look at it." His audience laughed. But it's not funny.

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