Opinion
Guest Voices



President Donald Trump bows his head during the National Prayer Breakfast Feb. 5, 2026, in Washington. (AP/Evan Vucci)



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After the latest alleged attempt on Donald Trump's life at the White House correspondents' dinner on April 25, 2026, some of his Christian supporters responded in a way that has become almost routine. His survival, they said, was the hand of God at work. Franklin Graham, who had been in attendance that night, wrote on X, "After three assassination attempts, some people say that President @realDonaldTrump is one lucky man. I don't think luck has anything to do with it — I believe it is the hand of God. What do you think?"

Speaking on Fox News the next morning, prominent evangelical Robert Jeffress said, "Somebody has said every person is immortal until his work on Earth is done. And I think the fact that the president was spared a third time from an assassin's bullet is a sign that God is not through with Donald Trump yet. He's got a great purpose."

These are not isolated examples. For many years, prominent Christian allies have described Trump in language that reaches beyond ordinary political support. In addition to being specially chosen by God, he has often been compared to the biblical Cyrus, the Persian king who, in the books of Isaiah and Ezra, is used by God to free Israel from exile and rebuild Jerusalem. And while Trump has never really sold himself as a particularly pious Christian, he often encourages this sacred framing on the part of his supporters.

At the National Prayer Breakfast in February 2026, Trump joked that because Speaker Mike Johnson prays so often, including before meals, he likes to "hang around with him" because he feels "protected a little bit." Christian faith and prayer here become forms of personal security and protection from harm, which Trump is more than happy to benefit from.

Whether Trump is compared to King Cyrus, or gets a little "protection" from hanging out with the openly pious speaker of the House, these transactional frameworks also help Christians to combat what would otherwise amount to a nearly incomprehensible level of hypocrisy. Sure, Trump has many moral failures that would ordinarily disqualify him from Christian support but a) God has chosen him for a special purpose, yet to be revealed, and b) he is willing to fight for us Christians, even if his own Christian practices are not evident.

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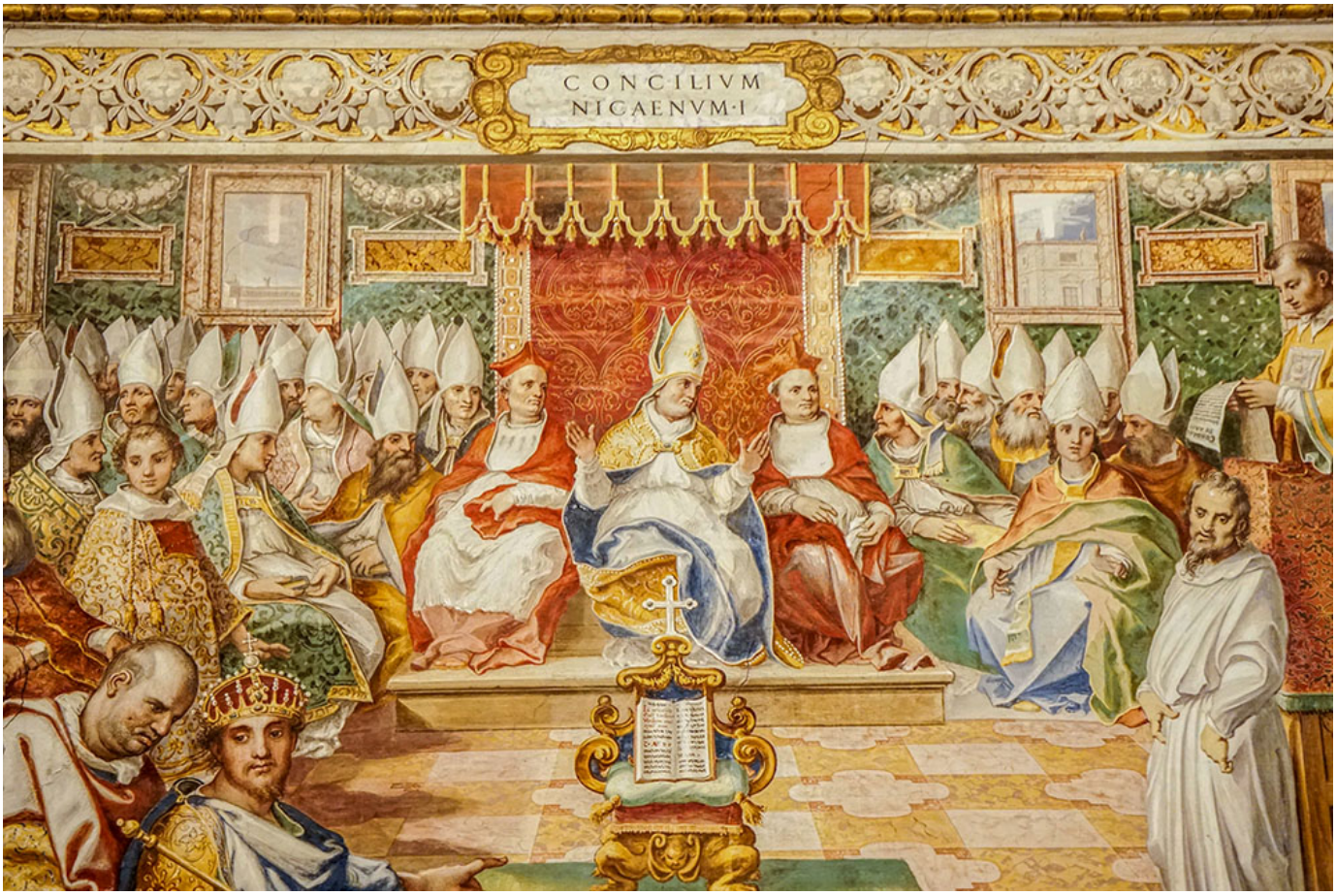
But there is another tendency that has also developed when it comes to Trump, one that has raised more alarm bells for both Catholics and evangelicals: that is the comparison of Trump to Christ himself. This rhetoric became extraordinarily pronounced during Holy Week of this year, as the escalating war in Iran coincided with Christian remembrance of Jesus' passion.

On Wednesday, April 1, during an Easter lunch at the White House, Paula White-Cain, a Pentecostal televangelist and Trump's spiritual adviser, directly compared Donald Trump to Jesus Christ. At the podium, with Trump standing behind her, White-Cain said, "Mr. President, no one has paid the price, like you have paid the price. It almost cost you your life. *You* were betrayed, arrested, and falsely accused. It's a familiar pattern that our Lord and Savior showed us. But it didn't end there for him, and it didn't end there for you. ... And, sir, because of his resurrection, you rose up. Because he was victorious, you were victorious."

Critics of White-Cain's words quickly reached for the charge of idolatry. One Catholic commentator called White-Cain's remarks "idolatrous blasphemy," while other Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, denounced them as blasphemous and sacrilegious. When, several days later, Trump posted an AI image of himself as Jesus , the claims of idolatry grew louder, with many citing the First commandment in Exodus 20:3, "You shall not have other gods beside me."

But however understandable those reactions, the real issue with comparing Trump to Jesus is not idolatry, but Christology.

The church's very existence depends not only on the word of God as contained in holy Scripture, but on the creeds, which are statements of belief about who God is and what God's relationship is to his son Jesus. The early creeds of First Council of Nicaea (325) and Council of Chalcedon (451) were written to clarify that Christ is not merely godlike, heroic, morally exemplary, or especially aligned with divine purpose. He is one with God — true God from true God — and fully human as well, the singular mediator through whom salvation comes.



A fresco in the Sistine Hall of the Vatican Library depicts the First Council of Nicaea. (CNS/Carol Glatz)

Without this creedal belief, anyone who undergoes an ordeal could be compared to Christ, and the difference between Jesus and the rest of us becomes only a difference of degree. The church labored over these distinctions because it understood that unless Christ was understood as unique — both fully God and fully human, he could not have accomplished the atonement. If he is not unique, then Christ's status can be assigned to political leaders and war heroes, and Christ's atonement, and therefore salvation itself, is negated.

Pete Hegseth proved that these early Christian concerns were on point when he recently compared a downed airman's rescue from Iran to Jesus' resurrection: "Shot down on a Friday, Good Friday. Hidden in a cave, a crevice, all of Saturday, and rescued on Sunday. Flown out of Iran as the sun was rising on Easter Sunday, a pilot reborn." Again, this is not idolatry, or the worship of another god. This is instead a distortion of Christology — a confusion about who Jesus is and what, in the

theological tradition, makes him unique.

The problem with Trump's AI image of himself as Jesus, or the words of White-Cain and Hegseth, is not simply that they are idolatrous or that they violate the First Commandment. It is that they hollow out Christianity by dissolving the singularity of Christ into a reusable political metaphor. Once any embattled leader can be cast as savior, any comeback as resurrection, any survival as divine election, Christianity's central claim loses its meaning.

The old creeds rightly insist that Christ is not one exemplary sufferer among many, but the unique mediator through whom God saves humankind. Casting Trump as Christ is therefore not only blasphemous or idolatrous. It is a denial of Christianity's deepest theological foundation.