and *Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue* to apply some much-needed pressure to the assumption that flattery is necessarily a bad thing. As Mandeville points out, flattery can serve as “a mechanism of socialization and moral education” (p. 133). As any parent (or teacher) knows, flattery is a great way of motivating people to do good things—especially when those people do not find goodness to be intrinsically motivating, as Mandeville assumes of us all. According to Kapust, Mandeville’s openness to the potential benefits of flattery is traceable to his theory of language, which “is a manifestation of our naturally selfish urges at its origins” and something “we deploy . . . in an opaque fashion to get what we want” (p. 161). This perspective contrasts markedly with Adam Smith’s, who found it possible to maintain a distinction between flattery and praise, given his different view of language—as something that “shap[es] its speakers as they shape it, with the speakers themselves aiming at transparency” (p. 161).

Finally, Chapter 5 looks at charges of flattery launched by Federalists and anti-Federalists alike during the ratification debates over the U.S. Constitution. The crux of Kapust’s argument here is that “[w]hereas the Federalists depict the Anti-Federalists as flattering local prejudices . . . the anti-Federalists not only look back to and invoke anti-monarchical language familiar from seventeenth-century England; they also depict the Federalists’ desired outcome—the *prospect* of a strong regime capable of projecting power and achieving wealth and status—as a flattering prize” (p. 171). Ultimately, Kapust speculates that the Federalist argument won out because it managed to combine a seductive vision of America’s potential future self with a steady commitment to long-held beliefs about its distinctive character.

Engaging, insightful, and ambitious, *Flattery and the History of Political Thought* is a great book. But, as with any book, there are things about it that could be different. For one thing, it would have benefited from some critical evaluation of the recounted arguments. I found myself wholly unpersuaded by the Cicero/Pliny position, for example: the idea that relationships can be injured against the effects of structural inequality by character and earnestness has always been a favorite conceit of the privileged, and one that is particularly cherished today. Relatedly, I was also surprised that a book so attentive to the link between domination and flattery had no sustained discussion of race or gender. While it is not my view that *every* book needs to address these subjects, I do believe that a book about flattery probably should. I would wager that Mary Wollstonecraft and Ralph Ellison have more penetrating things to say about flattery than Hobbes does.

Still, this is a request for something more as opposed to something different. And more is what I expect we can look forward to now that Kapust has cut a much-needed path through this important subject.


— James L. Guth, Furman University

When President Donald Trump announced his decision in late 2017 to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and relocate the U.S. embassy there, pundits offered various explanations for the move. Some saw a “payoff” to pro-Israel campaign contributors, such as casino magnate Sheldon Adelson, or a reward to the Orthodox Jewish community for voting Republican. Still others detected the presence of Zionists among Trump’s personal associates. Almost all observers, however, attributed at least some influence to the expectations of evangelical Protestants, a critical part of the GOP’s electoral base and fervent advocates of “Christian Zionism.”

Interest in Christian Zionism has produced a vast corpus of popular and scholarly works over the past few decades. Much of that literature has come from religion scholars, tracing the historical evolution of this belief system and, often, arguing over its theological merits. Christian Zionism has also piqued the interest of secular journalists, who typically approach it with a condescending mixture of incredulity, scorn, and alarm. A few political scientists have stumbled upon the potent impact of evangelical religion on public support for Israel, but seldom know what to make of it or how to fit this phenomenon into a broader understanding of religion’s role in American politics.

In *God’s Country*, Samuel Goldman offers a sweeping review of Christian Zionist thought over the course of American history. His strategy is unique, bringing deep reading of Christian Zionism into conversation with central themes in American political thought. As the publication blurbs claim, Goldman’s treatment has impressive virtues, beyond the obvious one of timeliness. The book is a delight to read: The prose is clear and lively, and Goldman is a master at revealing unusual connections and neglected events that illustrate his key points. And he exhibits a welcome evaluative balance, laying his cards on the table from the start. As a “minimally observant” Jew who is “conservative in several respects,” but politically to the left of his subjects (p. 11), he can both empathize with and critique Christian Zionism.

Goldman starts with a conventional definition: Christian Zionism is a movement that supports “a Jewish state in some portion of the biblical Promised Land” and that “draws its main inspiration from Christian beliefs, doctrines, or texts” (p. 4). Where he departs from most journalistic coverage, but converges with recent
scholarship, is in his adamant deemphasis on premillennial dispensationalism as the prime source of Christian Zionism. Conceding that “End Times theology” is a significant contemporary force, he argues that the movement’s roots lie much deeper in European and American Protestant theology, embedded in themes of covenantal theology, biblical links between past and future, and the tenets of American civil religion.

To establish these claims, Goldman moves chronologically through successive theological influences, beginning with the Reformation and its American expression in Puritan “typology.” He then finds converging images of the New and Old Israel in the Old Testament–heavy political imagery of the American Revolution, in which prominent religious thinkers (and many political leaders) speculated that the emergence of the “New Zion” might lead to the restoration of the “Old.” In the mid-nineteenth century, revivalism (in both postmillennial and premillennial variants) fostered a new Protestant interest in the return of the Jewish people to Palestine, eventually producing a national political campaign to achieve that result. The “Blackstone Memorial,” a petition submitted to at least two American presidents, solicited official assistance in establishing a Palestinian homeland for Jews. This decades-long enterprise was endorsed by an impressive array of American Protestants, including prominent religious, business, and political leaders.

Besides emphasizing its historic Protestant roots, Goldman further bolsters his objection to premillennialist accounts by detailing the support provided for Christian Zionism by famous mid-twentieth-century theological liberals, such as Reinhold Niebuhr and Harry Emerson Fosdick. Their endorsement stemmed from active participation in the liberal battle against anti-Semitism, a belief in ethnic self-determination, and appreciation for Judaism’s ethical contributions to Western civilization. These considerations only grew in importance after the experiences of World War II and the Holocaust. Then in the 1950s and 1960s, Christian Zionism prospered even more from “Cold War-era attempts to find the meaning of American power in the travails of the people and the Land of Israel” (p. 124), an argument that Goldman illustrates by an insightful and creative examination of popular culture, especially films.

By the 1970s, however, Goldman’s picture of a generally Christian Zionist America is increasingly hard to sustain. As he recognizes at points, Christian Zionism (as well as the Jewish version) always faced opposition from certain sectors within mainline and liberal Protestantism (as well as Catholicism), forces that gathered strength in the last quarter of the twentieth century. By the 1980s, liberal religious leaders were increasingly critical of Israeli policy, reflecting in part the growth of “liberationist” perspectives among Catholic (and mainline Protestant) thinkers, an influence which Goldman almost completely ignores.

The shifting perspective among many liberal Christians occurred even as evangelicals’ enthusiasm for “Israel’s return” mounted through the 1967 and 1973 Middle East conflicts. Indeed, it is at this point that popularizers of “End Times” theology began producing the books (e.g., Hal Lindsey’s The Late, Great Planet Earth, 1970) and, eventually, the movies (e.g., The Rapture series) that helped make friendship with Israel a religious duty for many evangelicals, fostering an increasingly well-organized and vocal political defense of the Jewish state. As a result, the growing divisions among prominent Christian leaders were replicated in the mass public, with significant differences appearing among both clergy and parishioners, as evangelicals far outpaced other Christian groups in pro-Israel sentiments.

The weakest part of Goldman’s survey comes at the end. His final chapter on recent iterations of Christian Zionist thought and politics is disappointingly brief and fails to capture the proliferating theological and political debates over Israel in mainline Protestant, evangelical, and Catholic communities. He does muse about the future of Christian Zionism’s core religious constituency, as evangelical numbers decline and younger evangelicals fail to identify with Israel as strongly as their elders, and also notes, again too briefly, that as Christian Zionism faces challenges in the United States, it has spread across the world with the explosive growth of Pentecostal and evangelical Protestantism. All of these issues deserve further exploration.

Although primarily a work in political thought, Goldman’s provocative narrative raises critical questions for empirical inquiry. Although he demonstrates the deep roots of Christian Zionism in historic Protestant thought, his deemphasis on “End Times” theology minimizes one obvious explanation for the large religious gaps in public support for Israel. Might not, in fact, evangelicals’ strong support for Israel reflect attachment to the special theological framework of dispensationalism? If not, Goldman’s account does suggest other plausible sources, such as biblical literalism, philo-Semitism, the remnants of covenant theology, or perhaps the residue of American civil religion. Because we have so few surveys with the questions needed to test these and other hypotheses, isolating the theological sources of Christian Zionism in the American public remains an elusive and intriguing task. Anyone engaged in that endeavor is well advised to think deeply about Goldman’s fine work.


— Kathleen R. Arnold, DePaul University

In her timely book, Katie Oliviero explores the theoretical category of vulnerability, which bridges discourse and