

# Religion and State: Christian Nationalism's Threat to Democracy

Blake Ziegler, Religious Action Center

Ready, Set, Go! San Antonio

Texas Impact



**TEXAS**  
RELIGIOUS ACTION CENTER  
OF REFORM JUDAISM

# Relational Question

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*Turn to a neighbor and share:*

- Why did you sign up for this breakout session?
- What are you hoping to learn?

# Spiritual Grounding

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"Jerusalem, I have set watchers upon your walls who shall never be silent by day or by night O you, the ones who remember the ETERNAL, take no rest."

*Isaiah 62:6*

*Translated by Rabbi Joshua Fixler*



**Religious Freedom in the U.S.**

# Religion and the U.S. Constitution

## 01. *Establishment Clause*

**“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment, U.S. Constitution

## 02. *Free Exercise Clause*

**“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment, U.S. Constitution

## 03. *Incorporation Clause*

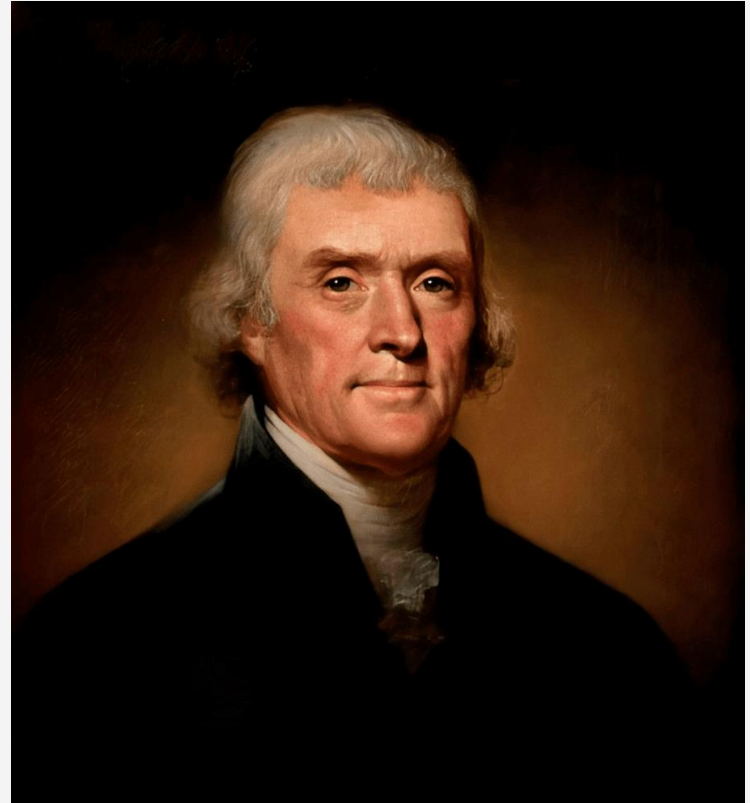
**“All persons born or naturalized in the United States...No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”**

- 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, U.S. Constitution

# Separation of Religion and Government

*Thomas Jefferson*

“I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ **thus building a wall of separation between Church & State.**”



# Understanding Christian Nationalism

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- Attempt to end American democracy and replace it with Christian theocracy
- Rooted in the false belief that America was built as a Christian nation
- Does not represent Christianity as a religion or all Christians

**“[Christian Nationalism] is not a social or cultural movement. It is a political movement, and its ultimate goal is power...**It demands that our laws be based not on the reasoned deliberation of our democratic institutions but on particular, idiosyncratic interpretations of the Bible.”

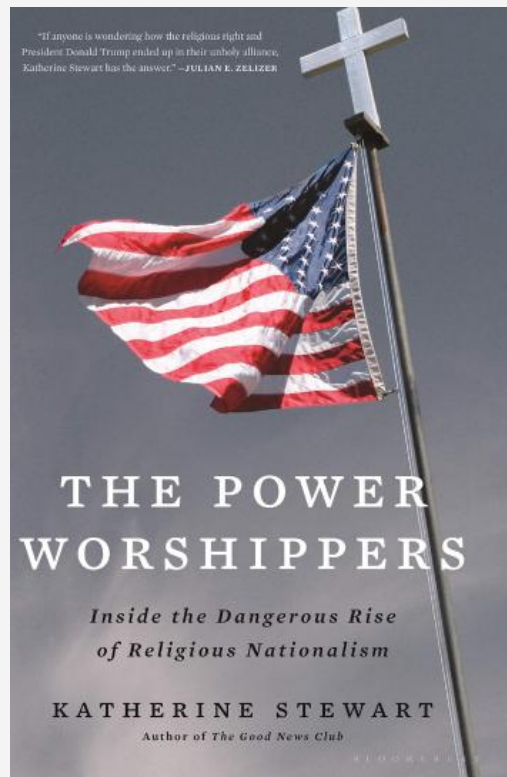
- Katherine Stewart, *The Power Worshippers*

# Understanding Christian Nationalism

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“Christian nationalism, by its nature, **must deny the extraordinary achievement of America’s founders** in creating the world’s first secular republic and **replace it with the kind of shabby religious-nationalist mythology that characterizes reactionary movements** around the world.”

- Katherine Stewart, *The Power Worshippers*



# Understanding Christian Nationalism

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Christian nationalism must be understood as a **structure, not a one-off event or singular policy**. It is a coordinated effort to integrate ahistorical, inaccurate interpretations of Christianity as the law that regulates social, economic, and political behavior.

# In Pairs

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*Turn to a neighbor and share:*

- Tell a story about a time when have encountered Christian nationalism or attacks on separation of church and state.

OR

- Tell a story about that illustrates why you care about this issue?

The background is a solid green color. On the right side, there are three large, white, circular shapes arranged vertically. The top and bottom circles are partially cut off by the edges of the frame. The middle circle is also partially cut off, but its central portion is visible. The text "Christian Nationalism in Texas" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font on the left side of the image.

# Christian Nationalism in Texas

# School Chaplains

2023-2024

- 2023: Texas legislature mandates school districts to vote on permitting unlicensed chaplains to serve as school counselors
- 2024: Overwhelming number of school districts reject the program



# Bluebonnet Curriculum

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*2024-Present*

- 2024: State government approves use of Bluebonnet Learning curriculum despite repeated criticism of ahistorical material that infuses Christian concepts and teaching, particularly in history
- 2025: States continue to adopt curriculum to receive \$60/student benefit



# Ten Commandments

*2025-Present*

- 2025: Texas legislature passes law mandating the display of the Christian Ten Commandments in public schools
- Lawsuits ensue, challenging the law on Establishment Clause grounds
- 2026: Fifth Circuit ruled Ten Commandments are non-coercive, awaiting appeal



# School Prayer

*2025-2026*

- 2025: Texas legislature mandates school districts vote on permitting a daily period of school-led prayer
- 2026: 98% of school districts voted to reject the bill



# Literary List

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2025-2026

- 2025: Texas State Board of Education considering mandatory list of readings for English classes K-12, which includes overwhelmingly Protestant Christian readings
- 2026: Final list contains over two dozen texts with Protestant Christian themes, including at least one Biblical text per grade level



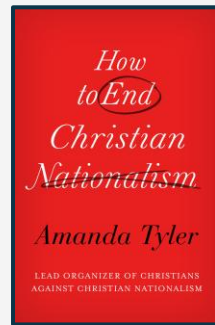
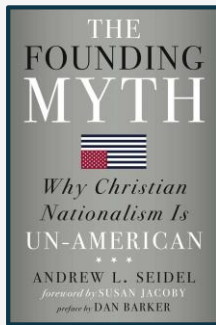
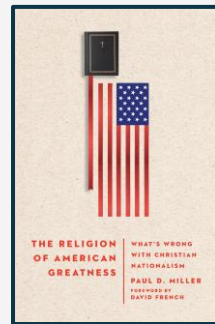
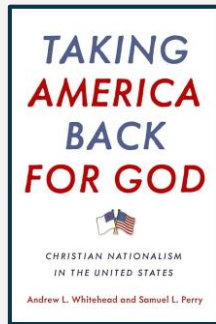
# Take Action

# Take Action Against Christian Nationalism

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## Educate Yourself

- Check out these books!
- Follow organizations like Texas Impact, Baptist Joint Committee, Americans United, RAC, and more that take action against Christian nationalism
- Make sure you are familiar with the principles and strategies of Christian nationalism so you can recognize it



# Take Action Against Christian Nationalism

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## **Converse With Others**

- Ask your friends, community members, and leaders of your congregation about their knowledge and willingness to take action against Christian nationalism
- What do they know about Christian nationalism?
- What messages do they hear?
- Have there been times where they spoke up against Christian nationalism? How did that feel? What was successful/unsuccessful?
- Are they interested in speaking out more?

# Take Action Against Christian Nationalism

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## **Make Your Voice Heard**

- Christian nationalist policies do not match the will of Texas voters. When these laws were brought to the local level (school chaplains, school prayer), the public overwhelmingly rejected them
- The state will continue to pass these laws until we demonstrate electoral consequences for passing legislation that does not align with public values
- Participate in the election! Visit [rac.org/evev](https://rac.org/evev) for opportunities to engage

**rac**

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