Check for updates

SOCIUS

Original Article

Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World
Volume 12: 1–16
© The Author(s) 2026
Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/23780231261447651
srd.sagepub.com
Sage

What Would Jesus Fund? Christian Nationalism and Americans' Views on Government Spending

Ibrahim Enes Atac[1], Lena Kunjan[2], Forrest Lovette[2], and Samuel L. Perry[3]

Abstract

Research on government spending focuses primarily on the roles of partisanship, ideology, and in-group self-interest. Beyond these, the authors propose that religiopolitical schemas have an independent (though interrelated) role in shaping Americans' conceptions of government's purpose, beneficiaries, and resource allocation. Conceiving of "Christian nationalism" as a religiopolitical schema rooted in "us versus them" hierarchical conceptions of social order and neoliberal ideas of government, the authors theorize Christian nationalism is associated with greater American support for government spending on controlling and punishing problematized populations, less spending on vulnerable populations and out-group interests, and no systematic preference when the in-group or out-group interest is less salient. Data from the 2021 General Social Survey affirm these expectations. Even after accounting for partisanship, ideology, and White victimhood, Christian nationalism is associated with support for greater government spending on crime, law enforcement, and the military and less spending on Blacks, safety nets, science, the environment, and other Democratic issues but is unrelated to spending on parks, highways, social security, and other areas in which in-group distinctions are less salient. Interactions reveal that Christian nationalism is more strongly associated with views on government spending among non-Republicans and nonconservatives. The authors discuss how Christian nationalist rhetoric is associated with spending priorities that reflect inequalities across multiple domains.

Keywords

Christian nationalism, politics, government spending, crime, welfare, race

Introduction

Fundamental to political debates in any democracy is how the federal government will allocate the resources it collects through taxation (Hayek 1944; Keynes 1936; Smith 1776). And in the United States, debates about government spending (and the taxation that supports it) are rooted in partisan philosophical disagreements regarding the key functions for which national governments should be held responsible, as opposed to local governments, businesses, private charities, or individuals (Doherty, Kiley, and Nida 2024; Hacker and Pierson 2016; Lepore 2010; Murray 1984). Yet because government spending inevitably helps some citizens perceived to need protection, resources, or some other special dispensation, beneath partisan philosophical disagreements on spending are even more elemental debates about national belonging, deservingness, and the proper ordering of civil society (Braunstein 2024, 2025; Faricy and Ellis 2021; Kirk 1985; Rawls 1971; Robin 2018).

To be sure, there are some issues for which partisan disagreements are less salient, such as funding highways and other forms of infrastructure (Lardieri 2021; Newport 2021) or "third-rail" entitlements like social security and veterans' benefits (Coe et al. 2025; Doherty et al. 2024). However, some spending debates touch squarely on ideological and partisan disagreements. For example, Americans on the political right—modern-era Republicans—have traditionally argued for a more limited national government, whose responsibilities include primarily (and perhaps only)

[1]Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, USA
[2]University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, USA
[3]University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK, USA

Corresponding Author:
Ibrahim Enes Atac, Pennsylvania State University, Department of Sociology and Criminology, 546C Susan Welch Liberal Arts Building, University Park, PA 16802-1503, USA.
Email: ienesatac@gmail.com

Creative Commons Non Commercial CC BY-NC: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) which permits non-commercial use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed as specified on the SAGE and Open Access pages (https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/open-access-at-sage).

protecting its citizens and their property by funding military and police (Jacoby 1994; Parker and Hurst 2021; Ramirez 2013; Van Green 2023). By contrast, Americans on the political left—for decades, Democrats—have traditionally envisioned a more involved federal government, advocating greater spending on behalf of interest groups and issues that Democrats tend to care about like social safety nets, public education, scientific advancement, foreign aid, and cleaner energy (Doherty et al. 2024; Grossmann and Hopkins 2016; Hacker and Pierson 2016; Krimmel and Rader 2021; Newport 2024; Van Green 2023).

Scholars rightly argue that these spending debates cannot be understood without taking into account America's racial history and the demographic makeup of its political parties (Gilens 2009; Goren 2003; Hancock 2004; Lieberman 1998). Yet we argue it is also critical to consider how Americans' religiopolitical conceptions of the nation, including its identity and values, shape their understanding of civic worth, belongingness, and social order (Braunstein 2025; Perry and Braunstein 2026). Within the past decade, scholars have demonstrated that the more Americans view their nation and its people as historically and essentially "Christian," and the more they advocate the preservation of its "Christian" foundations, the more they support reactionary views on virtually any political issue, including gun control, national borders, Muslim bans, harsher policing, abortion, civil rights for LGBT persons, and even support for political violence (e.g., Armaly, Buckley, and Enders 2022; Djupe, Lewis, and Sokhey 2023; Gorski and Perry 2022; McDaniel, Nooruddin, and Shortle 2022; Schmidgall, Perry, and Grubbs 2025; Seto, Schmidgall, and Perry 2025; Whitehead and Perry 2020). Importantly, these patterns hold even after accounting for Americans' political ideology and partisan identities, suggesting "Christian nationalism" explains something unique about Americans' political views.

Building on and extending the burgeoning research on Christian nationalism, we propose that the construct represents a religiopolitical schema rooted in a conception of a "Christian" (i.e., ethnotraditionalist) hierarchical social order that rewards in-groups and excludes out-groups, as well as neoliberal conceptions of government. Consequently, when considering how the federal government should allocate spending, we theorize that Christian nationalism will be associated with Americans endorsing funding to control populations intuitively coded as "non-White," while opposing funding to institutions or policies that either help populations intuitively coded as racial or economic minorities or represent interests coded as "Democratic." Because Christian nationalism is rooted in "us versus them" conceptions of social order, we also anticipate that when issues are less clearly coded as ideologically left or right, racialized, or partisan, Christian nationalism will not be a salient predictor. Moreover, we also test expectations regarding the ways Christian nationalism is moderated by racial and political characteristics (Djupe et al. 2023; Gorski and Perry 2022), expecting Christian nationalism to operate more strongly among White Americans and those on the partisan and ideological left. Our analyses of data from the 2021 General Social Survey (GSS) largely affirm our expectations in the main effects, and in Christian nationalism's interaction with political characteristics, though not racial characteristics.

Before proceeding with the analysis, in the following section, we locate our study within current research on public opinion regarding government spending. We also theorize the independent influence of Christian nationalism and consider its potential moderators in order to develop our hypotheses.

Background and Expectations

Public Opinion on Government Spending

Examining research over the past five decades, we can begin to understand the social and ideological antecedents of Americans' views regarding the amount and beneficiaries of government spending. Survey data collected in the 1970s and early 1980s documented a shift toward a more antispending posture among the general public, specifically toward interventions targeting vulnerable (and minority-coded) populations such as foreign aid, food stamps, and welfare (Citrin 1979). This shift not only coincided with Ronald Reagan's policy agenda, but it likely made his election possible (Crocker 1981; Sanders 1988). The coding and framing of particular issues have since been shown to powerfully influence public support. For example, Jacoby (1994) found Americans were more likely to support spending on programs that benefited the largest set of potential recipients. Alternatively, if the programs were tied to a specific recipient (i.e., Black people) or linked with negative political rhetoric and partisanly framed (i.e., food stamps), the funding garnered far less approval (Jacoby 1994, 2000).

Among the reasons why the coding or framing of a policy can so strongly influence public opinion is that Americans know so little about how those policies affect them. Americans' political knowledge is notoriously low, including their understanding of basic civics, current political conditions, or even the demographic composition and issue stances of political parties (Perry 2025). As a result, they are more

likely to shape their opinions on politicians and policies on the basis of in-group identity and emotions like fear and anger (Achen and Bartels 2016). Moreover, public opinion research on spending suggests Americans have a limited understanding of the scope of goods and services provided by their government (Krimmel and Rader 2021; Mettler 2018). Given this widespread ignorance and proven effectiveness of strategic rhetoric, politicians who frame spending debates using strategic "dog whistles" to racially code government programs with a negative valence or, alternatively, to activate in-group identity in a more advantageous direction, can shift opposition or support for government spending (Clarke and Fox 2014; Faricy and Ellis 2021; Jacoby 2000).

Therefore, in survey research on Americans' views regarding government spending, partisan and ideological identity are of central importance. That is, Americans will tend to approach a given question about whether the government should fund a particular policy, institution, or group primarily through the lens of how they understand their party or ideological identity. We would anticipate self-identified Republicans and conservatives, then, to hold stereotypical views on government spending, supporting policies that control problematized populations (police and military) and reducing spending on nearly all other issues. Conversely, we would anticipate the opposite among self-identified Democrats and liberals, favoring spending on most government programs with the exception of police and defense (Krimmel and Rader 2021; Newport 2024; Van Green 2023).

But beyond the importance of partisanship and ideology, the influence of race/ethnicity or racial coding in public opinion toward government spending touches on a deeper element of national belonging and deservingness (Davis 2019). White Americans tend to overestimate the number of Black welfare recipients, and their feelings on welfare spending are predicated on ideals that welfare recipients are, in fact, the undeserving poor and racial minority (Gilens 2009; Goren 2003; Hancock 2004; Lieberman 1998; Schneider and Jacoby 2005). Braunstein (2024, 2025) applies a "relational theory of taxation" to argue that Americans' views on paying taxes are not merely shaped by partisanship or race per se. Rather, they are also shaped by cultural narratives about good citizenship and how taxes, through their use in government programs, either contribute or detract from America's proper social order, an order in which "deserving" Americans are shielded from undue government burdens, while "undeserving" (the immoral, the takers) Americans are forced to pay their share.

This perspective helps inform empirical work showing religion's influence on views regarding government spending. To be sure, as Americans have "sorted" politically, religious identities increasingly reflect partisan allegiances (Perry 2022). Yet religious narratives about the role of government, hard work, individualism, the fundamental goodness (or badness) of capitalism, suspicion toward collectivism, can also shape Americans' views on spending (McCarthy et al. 2016; Schwadel and Johnson 2017; VanHeuvelen 2014; see also historical analyses in Hackworth 2012; Marti 2020). There has been an abiding narrative of moral worth and deservingness in the United States dating back to Civil War pension systems, as soldiers and mothers who righteously participated in the preservation of the nation were deemed more deserving of national public care (Skocpol 1995). And these "cultural categories of worth" remain to this day in the exclusionary American welfare system (Steensland 2006). Given these insights, we must consider Americans' religiopolitical understanding of the nation—that is, its religious identity and character—and how that can potentially shape Americans' views on government spending. It is here that we turn to consider the potential influence of Christian nationalism.

Christian Nationalism and Views on Government Spending

Despite interest in "Christian nationalism" exploding across social sciences in the past 10 years, there is a general scholarly consensus that the concept refers to a set of beliefs about the supposed "Christian" foundations of the United States and the need to preserve or restore those foundations (Djupe et al. 2023; Gorski and Perry 2022). Although this represents the explicit content of Christian nationalism measures, scholars argue that implicit within the construct are conceptions of a social order that favors ethnocultural in-groups, including Whites, traditionalist Christians, and men. Indeed, this idea seems to unite the theologically disparate groups who might be associated with the ideology (Adams 2024; Saiya 2025). Although the bulk of Christian nationalism research has focused on its implications for ethnoracial division and other reactionary forms of politics, several studies have begun to consider its economic implications. Together, these studies help guide our initial expectations for how Christian nationalism will be associated with views on government spending.

Focusing on relative support for funding certain policies in the 2007 Baylor Religion Survey, Davis (2019) found that the more White Americans affirmed Christian nationalist views, the more they supported halting the rising crime rate and protecting borders, but showed diminished support for funding "welfare." Similarly, Whitehead and Perry (2020) also used the 2007 Baylor Religion Survey, showing Christian nationalism predicted less support for seeking

economic justice, while also believing the government is spending too little on the military and controlling our borders. Most recently, Liberman, Lehman, and Kawakami (2024) analyzed 2021 GSS data to show that Christian nationalism was associated with less support for reallocating funds from the police toward social services. These patterns are consistent with more qualitative and historical analyses of Christian nationalist rhetoric, arguing that adherents of Christian nationalism tend to valorize masculine strength and authoritarian leadership (Adams 2024; Du Mez 2020; Nalani and Yoshikawa 2023), but also clearly delineated boundaries between ethnoreligious in-groups and out-groups (Gorski and Perry 2022).

Other recent research has found Christian nationalism associated with neoliberal and libertarian economic views (Hackworth 2012; Kruse 2015; Marti 2020). During the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, for example, Christian nationalism predicted the prioritizing of economic prosperity and liberty over protecting the vulnerable (Gaskins 2023; Perry, Whitehead, and Grubbs 2021). Perry and Braunstein (2026) also found that Christian nationalism was associated with antitax views, including taxation on the rich for the purposes of reallocating funds toward the poor. The flip side of this libertarian or neoliberal impulse is anticollectivism. Consistent with this, antisocialist beliefs are also at the forefront of discussions surrounding government spending and used by Christian nationalist leaders, politicians, and even retailers to antagonize economic inequality and in the hopes of convincing the public to limit the size of the state (Gorski and Perry 2022; Somashekhar and Kennedy 2025; Tebaldi and Gaddini 2024). Building on these findings, our first two hypotheses are the following:

Hypothesis 1: Christian nationalism will be associated with greater support for government spending on policies or institutions that control problematized populations, specifically the police or military.

Hypothesis 2: Christian nationalism will be associated with greater opposition toward government spending on policies that serve vulnerable populations.

Recent research on Christian nationalism has also stressed the obvious fact that Christian nationalism is more prominent among Republicans and conservatives (Whitehead and Perry 2020) because it represents a set of beliefs that are quite consistent with the Republican policy agenda and rhetoric around immigration, families, entitlements, and economic policy. Given its link with Republican partisanship, we would anticipate that Christian nationalism would be associated with Americans opposing government spending for issues that might not be easily coded as "prominority" or "provulnerable" but might otherwise be coded as "Democratic priorities." Conversely, when there is no clear ethnoreligious or partisan in-group or out-group in view, we expect that Christian nationalism will be unassociated with government spending on that issue. Stated more formally, our hypotheses are as follows:

Hypothesis 3: Christian nationalism will be associated with greater opposition toward government spending on policies intuitively coded as priorities for the Democratic Party.

Hypothesis 4: Christian nationalism will not be associated with support or opposition toward government spending on policies that are not intuitively coded for an ethnoreligious or partisan in-group or out-group.

Theorizing Moderating Effects of Race and Political Characteristics

Research shows that Christian nationalism often operates differently across racial and political characteristics. Numerous studies have found that the association between Christian nationalism and reactionary views tends to be stronger and more consistent among White Americans (Armaly et al. 2022; Baker and Whitehead 2026; Perry and Grubbs 2025; Schmidgall et al. 2025; Seto and Perry 2025; Seto, Schmidgall, and Perry 2025), prompting some scholars to suggest "Christian nationalism" ought to be understood as *White* Christian nationalism (Gorski and Perry 2022). Other scholars attribute the divergent effects of Christian nationalism among members of different racial groups to the worldview of in-group protection that Christian nationalism provides, which leads to differences in how Christian nationalism affects attitudes on racialized policy, economic, and social issues for White, Black, and Hispanic Americans (Goff, Silver, and Iceland 2026; Walker et al. 2025). Even studies focusing on economic outcomes find this pattern. Perry and Braunstein (2026), for example, found that Christian nationalism was more strongly associated with antitax views among White Americans compared with Black or Hispanic Americans. The belief in the narrative of White victimhood can also influence views on inequality. Kolber (2017) describes White victimhood as a "volatile tool" that diverts attention away from the harsh realities of race relations in the United States (p. 2). Perry et al. (2022) found that affirming White victimhood is associated with denying anti-Black injustice, while Gutin and Hummer (2021) point out

that White supremacy, with embedded narratives of White victimhood, contribute to resistance of social welfare policies. However, not all studies find these patterns. Using the 2021 GSS, Liberman et al. (2024) found that Christian nationalism's association with views on reallocating funding from the police to social services was not moderated by racial identity. Nevertheless, because racial identity is such a consistent predictor of Americans' views on government spending, and the moderating influence of racial identity on Christian nationalism is so consistent, we formulate the following hypothesis:

> **Hypothesis 5:** The predicted associations between Christian nationalism and government spending stated in hypotheses 1 to 4 will be stronger among White Americans compared with Black or Hispanic Americans.

Other research has consistently shown political characteristics to be a consistent moderator of Christian nationalism. Following from Christian nationalism's strong association with Republican partisanship and conservative political identity, Djupe et al. (2023) argue that Christian nationalism essentially represents "a Republican project." Consequently, studies have frequently shown that Christian nationalism shows little influence among self-identified conservatives and Republicans, because these Americans already hold right-wing views on various issues. Rather, Christian nationalism operates primarily among non-Republicans (Democrats and independents) and nonconservatives (liberals and moderates) to make them more like their right-leaning partisan and ideological counterparts (Djupe et al. 2023; Seto et al. 2025). This has also been the case in research examining Christian nationalism and Americans' views on taxation and redistribution (Perry and Braunstein 2026).

In light of this research, we expect that Christian nationalism will be associated with Democrats and independents, liberals and moderates adopting attitudes toward government spending that reflect the stand of Republicans and conservatives, respectively. In other words, we theorize that Christian nationalism will correspond with opposing government spending that benefits issues and groups coded as non-White and Democratic and supporting government spending that controls "problem" populations. More formally, our hypothesis is as follows:

> **Hypothesis 6:** The predicted associations between Christian nationalism and government spending stated in hypotheses 1 to 4 will be stronger among non-Republicans and nonconservatives compared with Republicans and conservatives, respectively.

Methods

Data

Data for this study are taken from the 2021 wave of the GSS. The GSS has historically been a face-to-face, nationally representative survey of the noninstitutionalized adult population of the United States. Collected by the National Opinion Research Center, the GSS was first administered in 1972. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout 2020, the 2021 GSS was administered as two studies, the second of which was an address-based and mail-to-web survey that was conducted from December 1, 2020, to May 3, 2021. Although the response rate was well below the typical response rates for previous GSS waves (17.4 percent), and this has demonstrable implications for some religious measurements (see Schnabel, Bock, and Hout 2024), comparisons between the 2021 and 2018 GSS (see Liberman et al. 2024; Seto and Perry 2025) show largely consistent patterns across most demographic variables. The GSS also provides survey weights to bring the sample into conformity with nationally representative demographics.

Outcomes

Outcomes for this study include 19 items that inquire about respondents' views on how much the federal government spends on various issues.[1] These include three items we associate with controlling or punishing problematized populations: "halting the rising crime rate," "law enforcement," and "the military, armaments, and defense."

The 2021 GSS also includes nine items we associate with helping vulnerable populations or other issues coded as Democratic Party priorities: "improving the conditions of Blacks," "foreign aid," "assistance to the poor," "welfare," "assistance for childcare," "mass transportation,"[2] "supporting

[1]We do not use the exhaustive list of items provided by the GSS. Because the framing of issues matters, the GSS will randomly ask one half of the sample about an issue such as the environment, while the other half will be asked about the environment with slightly different wording. Sometimes the differences are clear and other times the differences between the two phrasings are negligible. Thus, we intentionally chose items that were worded uniquely enough to where they were asking about two different policies, groups, or institutions.

[2]Black Americans and persons in the Democratic-coded Northeast are more than 3 times as likely to use public transit compared with White Americans and Americans in the South or Midwest, respectively. Similarly, urbanites are nearly 4 times as likely use public transit as suburban and rural Americans (Anderson 2016).

scientific research," "developing alternative energy sources," and "improving and protecting the environment."

Last, the items also include seven issues for which the in-group and out-group interest is less salient or could go either way: "Social Security," "dealing with drug addiction,"[3] "improving the nation's education," "highways and bridges," "improving and protecting the nation's health,"[4] and "parks and recreation," and "space exploration."[5] For each item, respondents could indicate that government spending was too little (1), about right (2), or too much (3).

We recoded items so that higher values indicate that Americans felt the government was spending "too little," meaning that they want more spending.

Key Predictors

The key independent variables for this study are Christian nationalism, partisanship, and political ideology, particularly because we expect the latter two characteristics to be the primary influences in Americans' views of government spending. "Christian nationalism" has been measured in a variety of ways (Djupe et al. 2023; Gaskins 2023; Gorski and Perry 2022; McDaniel et al. 2022). The 2021 GSS included three questions intended to capture the construct, which a growing number of studies have used to that end (Liberman et al. 2024; Perry and Braunstein 2026; Seto and Perry 2025; Seto et al. 2025). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement (1 = "strongly agree" to 5 = "strongly disagree") with three statements. The first two have been used in numerous Christian nationalism indexes (Djupe et al. 2023; Gorski and Perry 2022; Whitehead and Perry 2020): "The federal government should advocate Christian values" and "The success of the United States is part of God's plan." The last item is stated so that Americans who subscribe to Christian nationalism would more strongly disagree with it: "The U.S. would be a better country if religion had less influence." We recoded items so that higher values indicate greater support for Christian nationalist views. Following the majority of studies using multi-item Christian nationalism indexes, including those using these very items (Liberman et al. 2024; Perry and Braunstein 2026; Seto and Perry 2025; Seto et al. 2025), we created a summative index from 0 to 12 (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$).

Partisanship is measured with values ranging from 1 = "strongly Democrat" to 5 = "strongly Republican," where 3 = "independent/other." Likewise, political ideology is measured with values ranging from 1 = "extremely liberal" to 7 = "extremely conservative," where 4 = "moderate." Thus, in models, Christian nationalism, Republican partisanship, and Conservative ideology are included together and ought to incline Americans in the same direction, thus giving us the opportunity to assess their independent effects. Although these items are obviously associated, diagnostics did not indicate a problematic level of collinearity.

Controls

Our analyses include ideological and sociodemographic controls we theorize would be associated with Americans' views on government spending, as well as with our key predictors. Because views on spending can be influenced not only by racial identity but racial attitudes, we include a measure of racial resentment or, perhaps more accurately, White victimhood. Although 2021 GSS items were limited, we include a measure in which all respondents were asked how likely it is that a White American these days would be denied a job or promotion because it was given to a less qualified Black person (1 = "very likely" to 3 = "not very likely").

We also account for religious characteristics, which include religious identity and religiosity. For religious identity, we use a shortened version of the classification scheme proposed by Lehman and Sherkat (2018) with sectarian Protestant (reference), moderate Protestant, liberal Protestant, Catholic, other religion, and no identification. Religiosity is an index made from measures for religious service attendance (nine values), prayer frequency (six values), and religious importance (four values). Items were first standardized and then combined into an index (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$).[6]

Age and educational attainment are measured in years. Racial/ethnic identity was measured with four dichotomous dummy variables constructed from two measures in the GSS that ask about racial identity and Hispanic ethnicity: White (reference), Black, Hispanic, and other race. Sex is coded female = 0, male = 1. Family income is included as a series of five dummy variables: less than $20,000 per year (reference), $20,000 to $49,999, $50,000 to $89,999, $90,000 or more, and did not answer. Region of the country is measured with four categories: Northeast (reference), Midwest, South, and West. Descriptive statistics for all variables are presented in Appendix Table A1.

[3]Although this might be construed as dealing with a vulnerable, racially coded population, by 2021 the reality of illicit and prescription drug addiction for White Americans in rural areas and red states had become salient for Republicans as well (Gramlich 2018; Oliphant 2017), and thus we considered this a more bipartisan issue.

[4]Although typically a Democratically coded issue, because the 2021 GSS was fielded during the COVID-19 pandemic, we anticipated bipartisan support for spending in order to protect the nation's health.

[5]Although "space exploration" might be considered "science" and thus Democratically coded, the Pew Research Center (Kennedy and Tyson 2023) finds strong bipartisan enthusiasm for Americans' leadership in space exploration, and thus we did not anticipate Christian nationalism's association here.

[6]Djupe et al. (2025) demonstrate that including multiple religion variables together in models (including measures for Christian nationalism) can often produce suppressor effects resulting in biased coefficients. Because items such as worship attendance, prayer, and religious importance or so strongly correlated and make a reliable index ($\alpha = .85$) it is therefore more appropriate to include them together rather than introduce them separately, potentially creating problems for interpretation.

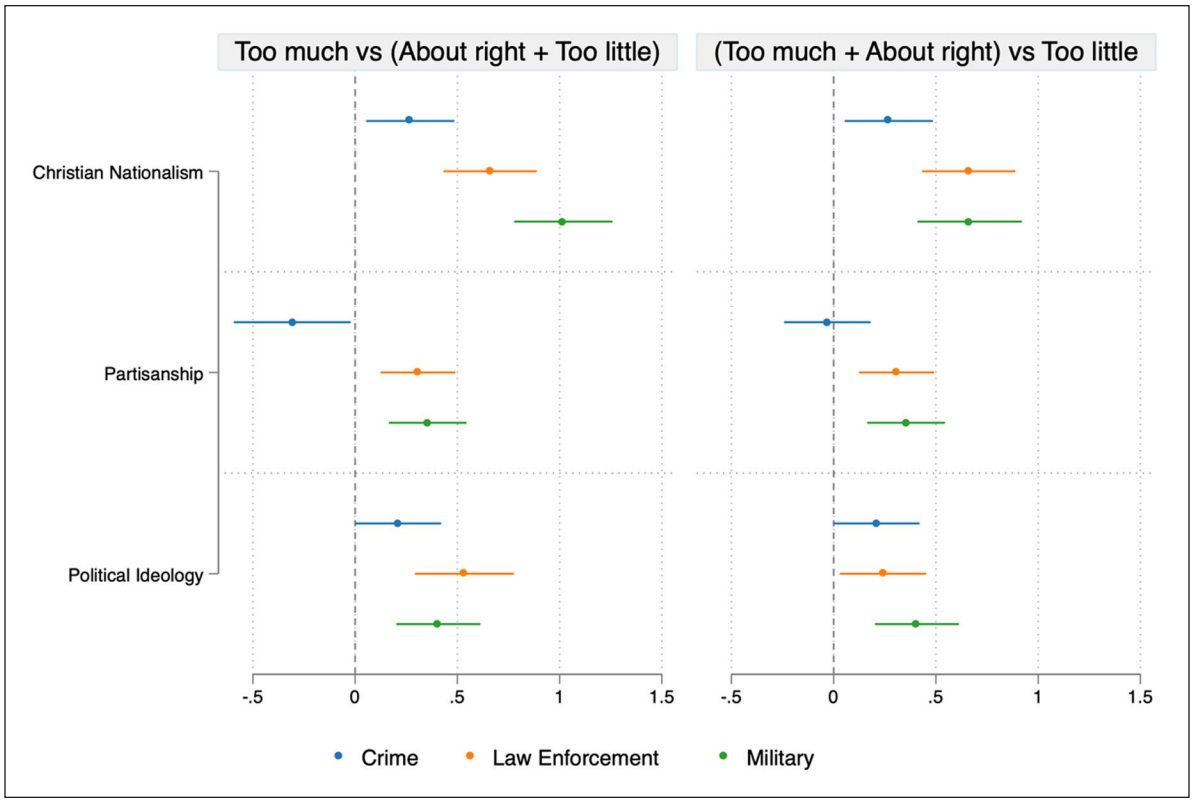


Figure 1. Marginal effects of key predictors on support for government spending to control problematized populations.
Source. General Social Survey (2021).
Note. Error bars denote 95 percent confidence intervals.

Plan of Analysis

All continuous variables were standardized using *z* scores to have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1 to facilitate comparison of effect sizes across predictors. We present marginal effects from partially generalized proportional odds (generalized ordered logit) models predicting each of our item types in Figures 1 to 3, focusing on the effects of Christian nationalism, Republican partisanship, and conservative political ideology (full regression models are provided in Appendix Tables A2–A4).[7] Figure 1 presents marginal effects for government spending on issues we associate with controlling or punishing problematized populations. Figure 2 presents marginal effects for government spending on issues we associate with helping vulnerable populations or priorities coded as Democratic Party concerns. Figure 3 presents marginal effects for government spending on issues that are not easily coded as in-group or out-group concerns. Error bars in each figure are all 95 percent confidence intervals calculated with robust standard errors because of the survey weighting. This also raises the threshold for statistical significance, making our findings more conservative.

Results

Figure 1 presents forest plots showing the marginal effects of Christian nationalism, Republican partisanship, and conservative political ideology on support for government spending regarding halting the nation's "rising crime rate," law enforcement, and military and defense. Effects to the right of the dotted red line of null significance reflect a positive association with government support, while effects to the left of the dotted line reflect a negative association. Error bars denote 95 percent confidence intervals, and error bars that do not cross the dotted line are statistically significant at the .05 level.

As we expected, the more Americans subscribe to Christian nationalism, the more they feel that the federal government is spending "too little" on addressing rising crime, supporting law enforcement, or national defense. Indeed, with Christian nationalism in the model, only partisanship attains statistical significance at the .05 level (see Figure 1, left) when it comes to support for spending to halt rising crime. Additionally, because predictors have been standardized using *z* scores, distance from the line of null significance also represents an effect size, showing that

[7]Models were estimated using partially generalized proportional odds (generalized ordered logit) models because tests of the proportional odds assumption (Brant tests) indicated violations in approximately half of the ordered logit models. However, most violations were attributable to control variables rather than the main independent variables and the results from ordered logit models were substantively similar.

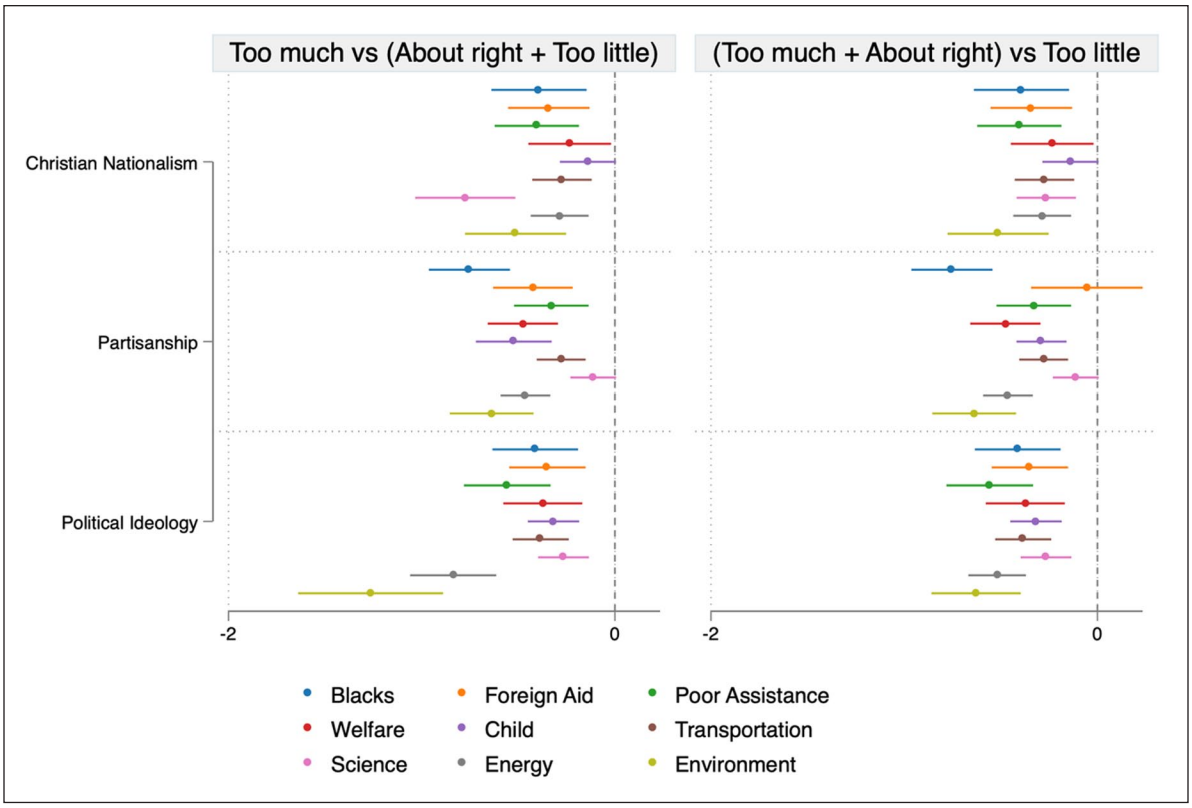


Figure 2. Marginal effects of key predictors on support for government spending on vulnerable populations or priorities for political opponents.
Source. General Social Survey (2021).
Note. Error bars denote 95 percent confidence intervals.

Christian nationalism is more strongly associated with each of the outcomes compared with Republican partisanship or conservative ideology (see Appendix Table A2 for full models). These findings lend support to hypothesis 1.

Turning to Figure 2, here we plot the marginal effects of Christian nationalism, Republican partisanship, and conservative political ideology on support for government spending on issues we anticipated would be coded as serving vulnerable or minority Americans: issues coded as Democratic Party interests. Consistent with our expectations, in all outcomes except for childcare assistance (significant only at $p < .10$), Christian nationalism is significantly and negatively associated with support for government spending, even after taking into account political characteristics, perceptions of White victimization, and a host of relevant factors (see Appendix Table A3 for full models). Specifically, the more Americans subscribe to Christian nationalist views, the more likely they are to say the federal government spends "too much" on policies or programs coded as helping non-Whites and/or the economically marginalized ("improving the conditions of Blacks," "foreign aid," "assistance to the poor," "welfare," "mass transportation") or coded as Democratic interests ("supporting scientific research," "developing alternative energy sources," and "improving and protecting the environment").

Unlike what we observed in Figure 1, the effect sizes in Figure 2 suggest Republican partisanship and conservative political ideology exercise a greater influence on the majority of these spending views, which confirms our assumption that these are highly partisan-coded issues. Yet Christian nationalism still exhibits a statistically significant, negative association with all but one outcome. Hypotheses 2 and 3 are thus supported.

Figure 3 presents marginal effects for seven outcomes that we anticipated would be less easily coded as helping or controlling vulnerable and minority populations or with a particular partisan interest, and thus, Christian nationalism would not have a clear effect. As we anticipated in hypothesis 4, Christian nationalism was not significantly associated with Americans' views on government support for "Social Security," "dealing with drug addiction," "education," "highways and bridges," "improving and protecting the nation's health," and "parks and recreation," or "space exploration" (see full models in Appendix Table A4).

Importantly, other indicators of partisan and ideological conservatism were also most often unassociated with these

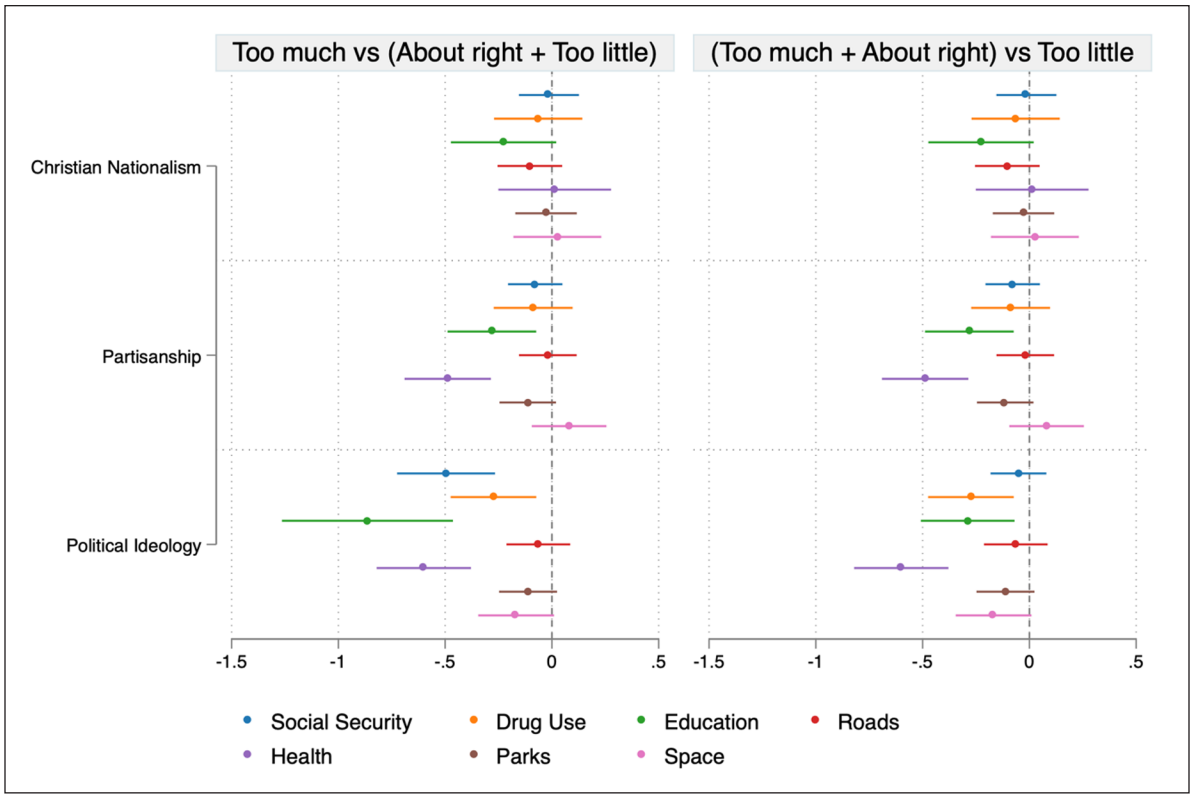


Figure 3. Marginal effects of key predictors on support for government spending to address issues without a clear political out-group.
Source. General Social Survey (2021).
Note. Error bars denote 95 percent confidence intervals.

outcomes. Republican partisanship was associated only with opposition to government spending on improving education and health (two of seven outcomes), while conservative ideology was only associated with opposition to spending on social security, education, health, and drug use (four of seven outcomes). These patterns support our notion that most of these items were not clearly coded as political in-group or out-group issues.

Was Christian nationalism's association with these outcomes moderated by racial identity or political characteristics? Because there are so many outcomes, presenting full tables or plotting marginal effects for each test would take up a tremendous amount of space. Thus, in Tables 1 and 2, we present results from interaction models indicating the value, direction, and statistical significance of interactions between Christian nationalism and racial identity (Table 1) and political characteristics (Table 2). Contrary to our expectations, we found very few statistically significant interactions between Christian nationalism and racial identity on any of our outcomes. Only regarding spending on mass transportation and improving the environment did we see modest, significant effects. But marginal plots revealed the differences here were quite minimal in reality. Hypothesis 5 was thus mostly unsupported here.

Interactions with political characteristics in Table 2 were more consistent, particularly for conservative political ideology. We found significant interactions for Christian nationalism and Republican partisanship on 9 of 19 outcomes, and significant interactions with conservatism on 9 out of 19 outcomes.[8]

Moreover, the pattern of these moderating relationships was consistent with our expectations. For the significant interactions, Christian nationalism seemed to be associated most strongly with non-Republicans and nonconservatives holding more right-leaning views on government spending, both in support of spending on controlling problematized

[8]As Rohrer and Arslan (2021) point out, interaction effects can often be unstable depending on the modeling strategy and nature of the variables under consideration. Given that we document identical patterns in ordinary least squares regression models, ordinal logistic regression models, and generalized ordered logit models, we have greater confidence that our interaction patterns are robust.

Table 1. Results from Interactions between Christian Nationalism and Racial Identity.

	Christian Nationalism × Black		Christian Nationalism × Hispanic	
	Too Much	About Right	Too Much	About Right
Crime	−.157	−.157	.079	.079
Law enforcement	−.007	−.007	−.091	−.091
Military	.128	.128	−.082	−.082
Blacks	.437	.437	−.216	−.216
Foreign aid	.434†	.434†	.364	.364
Poor assistance	.494	.494	.017	.017
Welfare	.419†	.419†	.399†	.399†
Child	.233	.233	.211	.211
Transportation	.342*	.342*	.559**	.559**
Science	.263	.263	.015	.015
Energy	.077	.077	.260	.260
Environment	−2.978***	−.738*	−.264	−.264
Social Security	.034	.034	−.039	−.039
Drug use	.065	.065	.262	.262
Education	−.033	−.033	−.415	−.415
Roads	−.005	−.005	.007	.007
Health	.211	.211	−.004	−.004
Parks	.041	.041	.235	.235
Space	.076	.076	.259	.259

Source. General Social Survey (2021).
Note. The reference category is White Americans.
†$p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, and ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

Table 2. Interactions of Christian Nationalism with Partisanship and Political Ideology (Full Models).

	Christian Nationalism × Partisan		Christian Nationalism × Ideology	
	Too Much	About Right	Too Much	About Right
Crime	−.153*	−.153*	−.470***	−.199**
Law enforcement	−.223**	−.223**	−.368***	−.368***
Military	−.219**	−.219**	−.343***	−.343***
Blacks	.00002	.00002	.193*	.193*
Foreign aid	.090	.090	.025	.025
Poor assistance	.153*	.153*	.199**	.199**
Welfare	−.007	−.007	.107	.107
Child	.111*	.111*	.156***	.156***
Transportation	.107*	.107*	.242***	.242***
Science	.082	.082	.054	.054
Energy	.083	.083	.098†	.098†
Environment	.203*	.203*	.154	.154
Social Security	.041	.041	.108*	.108*
Drug use	.046	.046	.123†	.123†
Education	−.011	−.011	.011	.011
Roads	.182***	.182***	.239***	.239***
Health	−.003	−.003	−.270*	.052
Parks	.071	.071	.054	.054
Space	.085	.085	.067	.067

Source. General Social Survey (2021).
†$p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, and ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

populations or opposing spending on issues coded as minority serving or Democratic interest. Marginal probabilities presented in Figure 4 illustrate these patterns that were consistent with other interaction effects. Here we present marginal probabilities that Americans said the federal government is spending "too little" on halting crime, law enforcement, and the military. Republicans and conservatives always start off higher on these views. And indeed, on a number of the outcomes, Republicans and conservatives also increase in their view that the government spends too little on controlling problematized populations as Christian nationalism increases. Yet we see a stronger association for Americans who are strongly Democratic or liberal. These groups ultimately catch up to their right-leaning counterparts, to where they are statistically indistinguishable at higher levels of Christian nationalism. Thus, although we did not find significant interactions between Christian nationalism and political characteristics for the majority of our outcomes, our hypothesis in this regard (hypothesis 6) received qualified support.[9]

Discussion and Conclusions

Debates about government spending are most proximally understood as debates rooted in partisanship, ideology, and ethnic in-group preference. But alongside, and even beneath, these surface distinctions are fundamental differences about national identity and conceptions of belonging, deservingness, and what activities constitute legitimate government activities as opposed to examples of overreach or collectivism (Braunstein 2024, 2025; Faricy and Ellis 2021; Kirk 1985; Rawls 1971; Robin 2018). It is for this reason we theorized that the religiopolitical schema of Christian nationalism represents (1) a conception of a traditionalist, hierarchical social order that rewards in-groups and excludes out-groups and (2) neoliberal conceptions of government. We thus hypothesized that Christian nationalism would be positively associated with support for increasing government spending on institutions that control or punish problematized populations; diminishing government spending on groups or policies coded as racial minority, economically disadvantaged, and/or Democratic priorities; and unassociated with spending views on issues for which no partisan or ethnocultural in-group or out-group is in view. We also expected these associations to be contingent on racial and political characteristics.

Examining 19 outcomes from the 2021 GSS, our analyses strongly affirmed our expectations in the main effects. Even after accounting for partisanship, political ideology, perceptions of White victimization, religious characteristics, and other demographic correlates, the more Americans subscribe to Christian nationalism, the more they think the federal government should spend more on halting rising crime, law enforcement, and the military, while wanting the government to spend less to help Blacks, foreigners, or the poor (in various forms), or to fund mass transit, science, new energy, or the environment. Also, as expected, Christian nationalism was unrelated to funding views on issues like social security, parks, highways, and other largely nonpartisan issues. Our findings regarding moderating effects were less consistent. Christian nationalism's effects varied little across race, contrary to expectations. But our hypotheses regarding political characteristics were more often confirmed: Christian nationalism was more strongly associated with the spending views of non-Republicans and nonconservatives, such that they tended to hold views more similar to their right-leaning counterparts.

Our study has several implications for understanding Americans' views on government spending. First, we show that Americans' views cannot be reduced to partisanship, ideology, or racial identity, or perceptions of White victimization. Indeed, when it came to issues such as funding efforts to halt crime, law enforcement, or the military, Christian nationalism was more powerfully associated than either partisanship or ideology. At the very least, this suggests Christian nationalism taps something about Americans' philosophy of governance, threat, and individual deservingness that other traditional political, religious, and demographic characteristics do not.

But what is it about Christian nationalism that makes it associated with government spending views in predictable ways? We do not necessarily attribute the pattern of Christian nationalism's associations to religiosity or a specific theological tradition per se. After all, we found that religious identity and religious commitment (measured with worship attendance, prayer frequency, and religious importance) were often unrelated to spending views. Indeed, when religiosity was significantly associated with our outcomes, it was often in the opposite direction as Christian nationalism (see Djupe et al. 2025). Strictly speaking, the complex of beliefs in our Christian nationalism index reflects an understanding that the nation is divinely favored in its history, would benefit from greater influence of religion in political life, and specifically, would benefit from the federal government advocating "Christian values." We agree with other scholars that the implicit content of this language (like all religious language) is coded and represents something deeper. In this case, we propose that Christian nationalism represents a

[9]As a robustness check, we sought to replicate our results with the newer 2024 GSS data. Unfortunately, the 2024 GSS included only one of our Christian nationalism items from the 2021 GSS ("The U.S. would be a better country if religion had less influence"), and it was missing several outcomes. Nevertheless, we estimated our generalized ordered logit models (see Appendix Tables A5–A7), and even with much smaller sample sizes, our substantive patterns still hold. Specifically, the more Americans affirmed the Christian nationalism indicator (in this case, the single-item indicator from the 2021 GSS) their odds of believing the government spends too little on controlling problematized populations increased, while their odds of believing the government spends too much on issues that help marginalized groups or political opponents increased, and had no statistically significant association with views on government spending for issues in which a clear out-group is not in view. Despite the limited comparison, this gives us greater confidence that the patterns we observed in the 2021 GSS are robust.

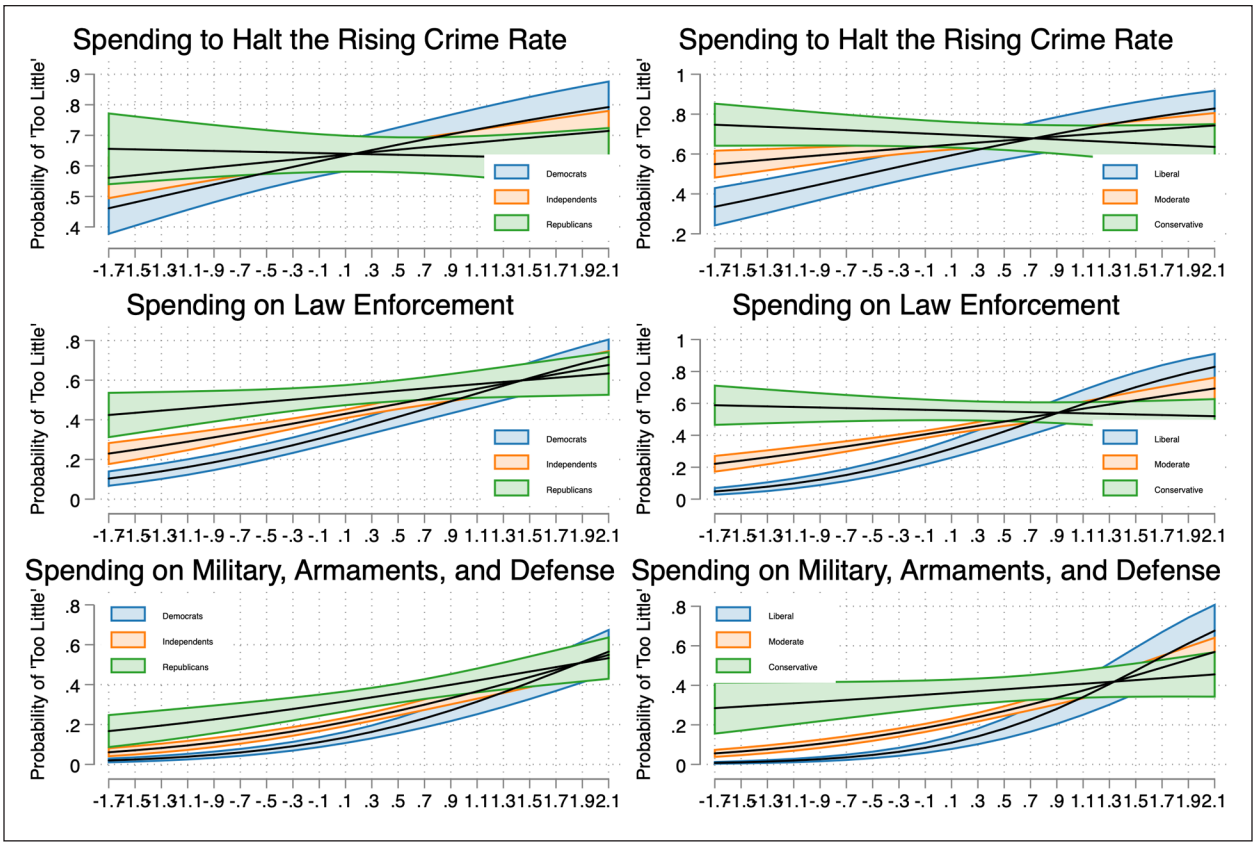


Figure 4. Predicted probabilities of saying the government spends "too little" on controlling problematized populations by political characteristics across values of Christian nationalism.
Source. General Social Survey (2021).
Note. All controls are held at their means. Bands are 84 percent confidence intervals to more accurately indicate statistically significant differences between effects at the .05 level (see MacGregor-Fors and Payton 2013).

schema that envisions a conservative, ethnoreligious social order in the United States, rooted in traditional hierarchies and, as both quantitative and historical work has shown, is powerfully connected to neoliberal, libertarian views of government (Hackworth 2012; Kruse 2015; Marti 2020; Perry and Braunstein 2026). It is also strongly connected to (though not necessarily reducible to) right-wing partisanship (Djupe et al. 2023).

In sum, Christian nationalism is associated with Americans' favoring funding personnel and institutions that forcibly protect society from (racially coded) internal and external threats while opposing funding for policies and institutions that serve undeserving ethnic or class outsiders or political opponents. Right-wing politicians, pundits, and other leaders are thus incentivized to use Christian nationalist rhetoric, advocate Christian nationalist educational curricula, and reinforce Christian nationalist understandings of U.S. history (see Grauley 2025), and these rhetorical strategies may be associated with public justifications of neoliberal economic policies that reinforce the inequalities they seek to preserve (Hacker and Pierson 2020). Moreover, our findings suggest the appeal of this strategy may not be limited to White Americans. Tests for moderating effects yielded little evidence that Christian nationalism's association with our outcomes varied across racial groups. Yet although numerous studies have documented divergent racial patterns in Christian nationalism research (Armaly et al. 2022; Perry and Grubbs 2025), including studies of economic attitudes (Baker and Whitehead 2026; Gaskins 2023; Perry and Braunstein 2026), other studies have not (Djupe et al. 2023; Liberman et al. 2024; Perry et al. 2021). The variety in moderation effects of race in Christian nationalism research may be explained by the worldview of in-group protection that Christian nationalism provides, which only leads to differences in effects of Christian nationalism on social, political, and economic issues that are clearly racially coded (Goff et al. 2026; Walker et al. 2025). The fact that we did not identify clear patterns in variation in how Christian nationalism is associated with support for government spending across different racial groups may be explained by the extent to which

the issues were coded to benefit one racial group over others.

In contrast, the moderating effects we observed for Christian nationalism lend more evidence for Djupe et al.'s (2023) argument that Christian nationalism largely represents a "Republican project," and thus seems to work most consistently on non-Republicans and nonconservatives to bring them more in line with their right-leaning counterparts. While our findings indicate that Christian nationalism is associated with non-Republicans and nonconservatives holding similar views on support for government spending as Republicans, it may be possible that the association between Christian nationalism and spending attitudes are embedded in different economic worldviews among left-leaning individuals, therefore, the support for government spending among some Democrats and moderates, while it may resemble that of Republicans, may be rooted in a focus on "means-testing" social policies among this group of respondents. The association between Christian nationalism and spending attitudes among Democrats may also be explained, at least for some individuals, by their degree of political awareness, where individuals who are less politically informed and aware are more susceptible to hold contradictory and fluctuating attitudes. Although Christian nationalism sometimes showed stronger associations among non-Republicans and nonconservatives, such cases did not constitute the majority of outcomes, instead, significant interactions were the minority for both partisanship and political ideology. And indeed, as we show in Figure 4, even as Christian nationalism seemed to have a more powerful association with the spending views of strong Democrats or extremely liberal Americans, it was also significantly associated with the views of Republicans and conservatives too. Thus, there is also a sense in which Christian nationalism may show similar associations across the partisan or ideological spectrum.

There are data limitations that would ideally be addressed in future research. Most obviously, the data are cross-sectional and despite strong theoretical reasons for the causal assumptions we are operating under, recent studies have sought to "prime" Christian nationalism through vignettes, images, quotes, or depictions of demographic threat (Al-Kire et al. 2021; Grauley 2025; Walker and Haider-Markel 2024), and this might be a promising strategy to more definitively isolate a causal effect of Christian nationalism on Americans' views on government spending. Moreover, although there exist helpful historical and content analyses of Christian nationalist rhetoric and its connection with government attitudes (e.g., Adams 2024; Hackworth 2012; Kruse 2015; Marti 2020; Nalani and Yoshikawa 2023; Somashekhar and Kennedy 2025; Tebaldi and Gaddini 2024), more qualitative research would be helpful specifically to unpack the explanations Americans provide that might directly connect Christian nationalist ideas with views of government spending. These approaches might be able to further advance questions that remain unanswered here regarding the way Christian nationalism operates among different racial groups as well as among politically right-leaning and left-leaning individuals, such as the ways in which issues must be racially coded to elicit varied responses among members of different racial groups that support Christian nationalism or understanding how and why some Democrats are receptive and support Christian nationalist ideas and frameworks.

Despite these limitations, the current study has demonstrated that Christian nationalism is associated with Americans' views on government spending in quite predictable ways. Moreover, this association seems to represent an influence not completely independent from ideological or partisan conservatism, but not reducible to either. Yet as Americans continue to sort politically, and religious Americans increasingly become aligned with right-wing identities and issue positions (Perry 2022), it may be that Christian nationalism will come to covary so strongly with Republican identification as to become empirically indistinguishable from it. Conversely, as Americans secularize, it may be that the partisan and ideological right no longer requires the language of Christian nationalism to recruit and justify support for preferred economic policies. Future studies will have to examine these possibilities as data become available.

ORCID iDs

Ibrahim Enes Atac https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3557-6304
Samuel L. Perry https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6398-636X

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Data Availability Statement

Data for this study are publicly available at https://gss.norc.org/get-the-data/stata. Both the authors' datasets and Stata code for replication will be posted at the corresponding author's Harvard Dataverse repository.

Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

References

Achen, Christopher H., and Larry M. Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Adams, Samuel L. 2024. "The Bible in Christian Nationalist Rhetoric." *Interpretation* 78(4):298–309.

Al-Kire, Rosemary L., Michael H. Pasek, Jo-Ann Tsang, and Wade C. Rowatt. 2021. "Christian No More: Christian Americans Are Threatened by Their Impending Minority Status." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 97:104223.

Anderson, Monica. 2016. "Who Relies on Public Transit in the U.S." Pew Research Center. Retrieved October 15, 2025. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2016/04/07/who-relies-on-public-transit-in-the-u-s/.

Armaly, Miles T., David T. Buckley, and Adam M. Enders. 2022. "Christian Nationalism and Political Violence: Victimhood, Racial Identity, Conspiracy, and Support for the Capitol Attacks." *Political Behavior* 44 (2):937–960.

Baker, Joseph O., and Andrew L. Whitehead. 2026. "Faith over Fear? Christian Nationalism and Cultural Fears in the United States." *Nations and Nationalism* 32(2):426–45.

Braunstein, Ruth. 2024. "Toward a Cultural Sociology of Taxation." *Socio-economic Review* 22(2):931–52.

Braunstein, Ruth. 2025. *My Tax Dollars: The Morality of Taxpaying in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Citrin, Jack. 1979. "Do People Want Something for Nothing? Public Opinion on Taxes and Government Spending." *National Tax Journal* 32(2):113–29.

Clarke, Conor, and Edward Fox. 2014. "Perceptions of Taxing and Spending: A Survey Experiment." *Yale Law Journal* 124:1252.

Coe, Jessie, Daniel Schwam, Rajeev Ramchand, and Carrie Farmer. 2025. "American Support of Public Programs for Veterans: Estimates from a National Survey Including a Discrete Choice Experiment." *Armed Forces & Society* 51(3):641–69.

Crocker, Royce. 1981. "Federal Government Spending and Public Opinion." *Public Budgeting & Finance* 1(3):25–35.

Davis, Joshua T. 2019. "Funding God's Policies, Defending Whiteness: Christian Nationalism and Whites' Attitudes Towards Racially-Coded Government Spending." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42(12):2123–42.

Djupe, Paul A., Amanda J. Friesen, and Andrew R. Lewis, et al. 2025. "Attending Church Encourages Acceptance of Atheists? Suppression Effects in Religion and Politics Research." *Political Behavior*. doi:10.1007/s11109-025-10057-z.

Djupe, Paul A., Andrew R. Lewis, and Anand E. Sokhey. 2023. *The Full Armor of God: The Mobilization of Christian Nationalism in American Politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Doherty, Carroll, Jocelyn Kiley, and Nida Asheer. 2024. "Americans' Views of Government's Role: Persistent Divisions and Areas of Agreement." Pew Research Center. Retrieved October 13, 2025. https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2024/06/PP_2024.6.24_role-of-government_REPORT.pdf.

Du Mez, Kristin Kobes. 2020. *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation*. New York: Liveright.

Faricy, Christopher G., and Christopher Ellis. 2021. *The Other Side of the Coin: Public Opinion Toward Social Tax Expenditures*. New York: Russell Sage.

Gaskins, Ben. 2023. "Exceptional Times for an Exceptional People: How the Prosperity Gospel, Christian Nationalism, and Race Affect Americans' Economic Attitudes and Behavior." *The Forum* 21(3):385–410.

Gilens, Martin. 2009. *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Anti-poverty Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Goff, Kerby, Eric Silver, and John Iceland. 2026. "The Moral Foundations of Christian Nationalism." *Sociology of Religion* 87(1):55–84.

Goren, Paul. 2003. "Race, Sophistication, and White Opinion on Government Spending." *Political Behavior* 25(3):201–20.

Gorski, Philip S., and Samuel L. Perry. 2022. *The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gramlich, John. 2018. "As Fatal Overdoses Rise, Many Americans See Drug Addiction as a Major Problem in Their Community." Pew Research Center. Retrieved October 15, 2025. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2018/05/30/as-fatal-overdoses-rise-many-americans-see-drug-addiction-as-a-major-problem-in-their-community/.

Grauley, Amy Brooke. 2025. "'We Should All Be Christian Nationalists': Elite Influence on Identification with Christian Nationalism." *Political Behavior*. doi:10.1007/s11109-025-10074-y.

Grossmann, Matt and David A. Hopkins. 2016. *Asymmetric Politics: Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gutin, Iliya, and Robert A. Hummer. 2021. "Social Inequality and the Future of US Life Expectancy." *Annual Review of Sociology* 47:501–20.

Hacker, Jacob S., and Paul Pierson. 2016. *American Amnesia: How the War on Government Led Us to Forget What Made America Prosper*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Hacker, Jacob S., and Paul Pierson. 2020. *Let Them Eat Tweets: How the Right Rules in an Age of Extreme Inequality*. New York: Liveright.

Hackworth, Jason. 2012. *Faith Based: Religious Neoliberalism and the Politics of Welfare in the United States*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Hancock, Ange-Marie. 2004. *The Politics of Disgust: The Public Identity of the Welfare Queen*. New York: New York University Press.

Hayek, Friedrich. 1944. *The Road to Serfdom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jacoby, William G. 1994. "Public Attitudes toward Government Spending." *American Journal of Political Science* 38(2):336–61.

Jacoby, William G. 2000. "Issue Framing and Public Opinion on Government Spending." *American Journal of Political Science* 44(4):750–67.

Kennedy, Brian, and Alec Tyson. 2023. "Americans' Views of Space: U.S. Role, NASA Priorities and Impact of Private

Companies." Pew Research Center. Retrieved October 15, 2025. https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2023/07/20/americans-views-of-space-u-s-role-nasa-priorities-and-impact-of-private-companies/.

Keynes, John Maynard. 1936. *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kirk, Russell. 1985. *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot*. Rev. 7th ed. Washington, DC: Gateway Editions.

Kolber, Jesse. 2017. "Having It Both Ways: White Denial of Racial Salience While Claiming Oppression." *Sociology Compass* 11(2):e12448. doi:10.1111/soc4.12448.

Krimmel, Katherine, and Kelly Rader. 2021. "Substantive Divergence: The Meaning of Public Opinion on Government Spending in Red and Blue." *Perspectives on Politics* 19(3):824–37.

Kruse, Kevin. 2015. *One Nation under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*. New York: Basic Books.

Lardieri, Alexa. 2021. "Majority of Americans Favor Increasing Infrastructure Spending, Poll Finds." *U.S. News & World Report*. Retrieved October 13, 2025. https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2021-07-22/majority-of-americans-favor-increasing-infrastructure-spending-poll-finds.

Lehman, Derek, and Darren E. Sherkat. 2018. "Measuring Religious Identification in the United States." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 57(4):779–94.

Lepore, Jill. 2010. *The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party's Revolution and the Battle over American History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Liberman, Jessica, Derek Lehman, and Atsuko Kawakami. 2024. "Christian Nationalism and Opposition to Reallocating Police Funding to Other Social Services." *Sociology of Religion* 85(3):324–45.

Lieberman, Robert. 1998. *Shifting the Color Line: Race and the American Welfare State*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

MacGregor-Fors, Ian, and Mark E. Payton. 2013. "Contrasting Diversity Values: Statistical Inference Based on Overlapping Confidence Intervals." *PLoS One* 8(2):e56794.

Marti, Gerardo. 2020. *American Blindspot: Race, Class, Religion, and the Trump Presidency*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

McCarthy, Angela Farizo, Nicholas T. Davis, James C. Garand, and Laura R. Olson. 2016. "Religion and Attitudes toward Redistributive Policies among Americans." *Political Research Quarterly* 69(1):121–33.

McDaniel, Eric L., Irfan Nooruddin, and Allyson F. Shortle. 2022. *The Everyday Crusade: Christian Nationalism in American Politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Mettler, Suzanne. 2018. *The Government-Citizen Disconnect*. New York: Russell Sage.

Murray, Charles. 1984. *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950–1980*. New York: Basic Books.

Nalani, Andrew, and Hirokazu Yoshikawa. 2023. "White Christian Nationalism and Youth Development in the USA." *Society* 60(4):551–65.

Newport, Frank. 2021. "American Public Opinion and Infrastructure Legislation." Gallup. Retrieved October 13, 2025. https://news.gallup.com/opinion/polling-matters/351815/american-public-opinion-infrastructure-legislation.aspx.

Newport, Frank. 2024. "Public Support for Making U.S. Government More Efficient." Gallup. Retrieved October 13, 2025. https://news.gallup.com/opinion/polling-matters/653657/public-support-making-government-efficient.aspx.

Oliphant, J. Baxter. 2017. "Prescription Drug Abuse Increasingly Seen as Major U.S. Public Health Problem." Pew Research Center. Retrieved October 15, 2025. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2017/11/15/prescription-drug-abuse-increasingly-seen-as-a-major-u-s-public-health-problem/.

Parker, Kim, and Kiley Hurst. 2021. "Growing Share of Americans Say They Want More Spending on Police in Their Area." Pew Research Center. Retrieved October 13, 2025. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/10/26/growing-share-of-americans-say-they-want-more-spending-on-police-in-their-area/.

Perry, Samuel L. 2022. "American Religion in the Era of Increasing Polarization." *Annual Review of Sociology* 48:87–107.

Perry, Samuel L. 2025. "Secularism, Sorting, and Americans' Political Knowledge." *Social Forces*. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soaf150

Perry, Samuel L., and Ruth Braunstein. 2026. "Not Paying unto Caesar: Christian Nationalism, Politics, Race, and Opposition to Taxation." *Social Forces* 104(3):1117–48.

Perry, Samuel L., Ryon J. Cobb, Andrew L. Whitehead, and Joshua B. Grubbs. 2022. "Divided by Faith (in Christian America): Christian Nationalism, Race, and Divergent Perceptions of Racial Injustice." *Social Forces* 101(2):913–42.

Perry, Samuel L., and Joshua B. Grubbs. 2025. "The Religion of White Identity Politics: Christian Nationalism and White Racial Solidarity." *Social Forces* 104(2):453–75.

Perry, Samuel L., Andrew L. Whitehead, and Joshua B. Grubbs. 2021. "Save the Economy, Liberty, and Yourself: Christian Nationalism and Americans' Views on Government COVID-19 Restrictions." *Sociology of Religion* 82(4):426–46.

Ramirez, Mark D. 2013. "Americans' Changing Views on Crime and Punishment." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 77(4):1006–31.

Rawls, John. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Robin, Corey. 2018. *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Burke to Donald Trump*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Rohrer, Julia M., and Ruben C. Arslan. 2021. "Precise Answers to Vague Questions: Issues With Interactions." *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science* 4(2):25152459211007368. https://doi.org/10.1177/2515245921100736 8

Saiya, Nilay. 2025. "The Varieties of American Christian Nationalism." *Politics & Religion* 18(2):171–89.

Sanders, Arthur. 1988. "Rationality, Self-Interest, and Public Attitudes on Public Spending." *Social Science Quarterly* 69(2):311–24.

Schmidgall, Darci K., Samuel L. Perry, and Joshua B. Grubbs. 2025. "Anti-Abortion and Pro-Coercion: White Christian Nationalism and Support for Arresting Women Who Have Abortions." *Social Problems*. https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spaf030

Schnabel, Landon, Sean Bock, and Michael Hout. 2024. "Switch to Web-Based Surveys during COVID-19 Pandemic Left Out

the Most Religious, Creating a False Impression of Rapid Religious Decline." *Sociology of Religion* 85(4):429–53.
Schneider, Saundra K., and William G. Jacoby. 2005. "Elite Discourse and American Public Opinion: The Case of Welfare Spending." *Political Research Quarterly* 58(3):367–79.
Schwadel, Philip, and Erik Johnson. 2017. "The Religious and Political Origins of Evangelical Protestants' Opposition to Environmental Spending." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 56(1):179–98.
Seto, Christopher H., and Samuel L. Perry. 2025. "Lay Down Your Sword? Christian Nationalism, Race, and Opposition to Requiring Gun Permits." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 48(10):2035–58.
Seto, Christopher H., Darci K. Schmidgall, and Samuel L. Perry. 2025. "Colorblind Cops in Christian America: Christian Nationalism, Race, Politics, and Beliefs about Racist Policing." *Sociological Quarterly* 66(2):382–410.
Skocpol, Theda. 1995. *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Smith, Adam. 1776. *The Wealth of Nations*. London: Strahan & Cadell.
Somashekhar, Mahesh, and Ian Kennedy. 2025. "The Business of Christian Nationalism: Examining Retailers' Self-Descriptions on a Conservative Christian Alternative to Amazon.com." *Sociology of Religion*. doi:10.1093/socrel/sraf014.
Steensland, Brian. 2006. "Cultural Categories and the American Welfare State: The Case of Guaranteed Income Policy." *American Journal of Sociology* 111(5):1273–1326.
Tebaldi, Catherine, and Katie Gaddini. 2024. "Socialism Sucks: Campus Conservatives, Digital Media, and the Rebranding of Christian Nationalism." *Information, Communication & Society* 27(8):1628–49.
Van Green, Ted. 2023. "6 Facts about Americans' Views of Government Spending and the Deficit." Pew Research Center. Retrieved October 13, 2025. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/05/24/6-facts-about-americans-views-of-government-spending-and-the-deficit/.
VanHeuvelen, Tom. 2014. "The Religious Context of Welfare Attitudes." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 53(2):268–95.
Walker, Brooklyn, Paul A. Djupe, Brian R. Calfano, Andrew R. Lewis, and Anand E. Sokhey. 2025. "Religion Is Sometimes Raced: Christian Nationalism as In-Group Protection." *Perspectives on Politics*. doi:10.1017/S1537592725102338.
Walker, Brooklyn, and Donald P. Haider-Markel. 2024. "Fear and Loathing: How Demographic Change Affects Support for Christian Nationalism." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 88(2): 382–407.
Whitehead, Andrew L., and Samuel L. Perry. 2020. *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Author Biographies

Ibrahim Enes Atac is a PhD candidate in Sociology and Social Data Analytics at the Pennsylvania State University. His research uses quantitative and computational approaches to study intergroup relations, immigration, culture, and politics. His work has been published in *Social Forces*, *Social Science Quarterly*, and the *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*.

Lena Kunjan is a PhD student in Sociology at the University of Minnesota. Her research examines religion and politics, with a focus on the intersection of religious and political identities and attitudes. She is also pursuing a graduate minor in political psychology and has been a Hella Mears Fellow at the Center for German & European Studies.

Forrest Lovette is a PhD student in the Department of sociology at the University of Minnesota. His research examines the intersections of evangelical Christianity, Christian nationalism, masculinity, political conservatism, and voting behavior in the United States. He received a bachelor's degree in sociology from Southern New Hampshire University and a master's degree in sociology from Freie Universität Berlin. His master's thesis used a quantitative cross-national comparative framework to analyze Christian attitudes toward wealth redistribution in Europe and the United States. His dissertation draws on mixed methods, including qualitative interviews and survey data, to investigate how political identities increasingly supplant religious identities in white, predominantly conservative suburban communities. In particular, his work explores how these shifting identifications contribute to the construction and intensification of symbolic boundaries, reshaping moral discourse, group belonging, and political ideologies.

Samuel L. Perry is the Sam K. Viersen Presidential Professor of Sociology at the University of Oklahoma. His work focuses primarily on the intersections of religion, politics, race, and families. His recent articles have appeared in *Social Forces*, *Social Problems*, and *Public Opinion Quarterly*. He is also the author or coauthor of five books, most recently the award-winning *Religion for Realists: Why We All Need the Scientific Study of Religion* (Oxford University Press).