

How Christian Nationalists' Concept of Disorder Is Being Used to Destroy Democracy, and What Can Be Done About It

COMPILED BY SEAN R. MCKAY, OCTOBER 7, 2026

Q: How do Christian nationalists refer to “disorder,” and what do they think it means?

A: Christian nationalists typically refer to “disorder” as **chaos**, **moral decay**, or **lawlessness**, viewing it as the inevitable result of removing traditional Christian values from public life.

Scholars and analysts studying religious extremism (such as those tracking the intersection of political ideology and social structures) report that adherents conceptualize disorder through specific core ideas:

How They Refer to Disorder

- **Chaos vs. Christ:** Writers and thinkers within these movements often frame society's choices as a binary between “Christ or chaos,” asserting that any framework outside of divine or biblical law inherently collapses into disorder.
- **Metaphysical and Moral Decay:** Shifts in cultural norms—such as changes in traditional gender roles, family structures, secular education, and sexual ethics—are described not as ordinary social changes, but as symptoms of a deep spiritual and metaphysical breakdown.
- **Architects of Disorder:** Adherents sometimes label progressive legislation, pluralism, or secular judicial rulings as active attempts to dismantle a righteous society or institutionalize lawlessness by statute.

What They Think It Means

- **Rejection of Hierarchy:** In the Christian nationalist worldview, true order relies on a traditional social hierarchy (such as male leadership in families and society). Disorder means the inversion or flattening of these structures.
- **Loss of God's Favor:** Adherents often believe that national hardships or cultural conflicts occur because a nation has violated God's laws, prompting a withdrawal of divine protection and a descent into social instability.
- **The Need for Authoritarian Control:** Because they view modern pluralism as leading directly to moral anarchy, proponents frequently justify strong, dominant rule or strict legal enforcement as a necessary defense to restore public order and obedience.

Q: Is the concept of “disorder” central to Christian nationalists' arguments?

A: **Yes, the concept of disorder—and its opposite, divine order—is foundational to Christian nationalist arguments.** In fact, researchers and political theorists note that the entire ideology is structurally dependent on the fear of impending chaos.

The concept functions as a central pillar of their arguments in several distinct ways.

1. The Justification for Authoritarian “Law and Order”

Christian nationalists argue that society is in a state of rapid moral and social collapse due to modern pluralism, secularism, and globalization. Sociological research indicates that because adherents view the world as constantly falling into chaos, they use this threat of “disorder” to justify a preference for strong, authoritarian social control. In their framework, when things are severely “off track,” a powerful leader is justified in breaking conventional rules or utilizing state power to enforce a Christian order.

2. Grounding Law in “God-Ordained Hierarchies”

To Christian nationalists, true order is not just about keeping the peace; it is **ontological and metaphysical**. Prominent conservative and nationalist thinkers argue the secular governance is inherently unsustainable because it is unmoored from divine truth. They assert that God created a specific “natural order” featuring distinct boundaries, gender roles, and social systems. Within books like Stephen Wolfe’s *The Case for Christian Nationalism*, arguments are made for a “Christian prince” or strong magistrate to legally enforce these boundaries and suppress “false religion” to maintain a well-ordered society.

3. A Mechanism of Fear and Mobilization

“Disorder” serves as a powerful rhetorical tool to create an in-group/out-group dynamic. By framing political opponents, progressive policies, and demographic shifts (like immigration) as “forces of disorder in the saddle,” Christian nationalist leaders mobilize voters through a sense of existential threat. The argument is simple: if the nation does not aggressively restore its Christian heritage, it will lose God’s favor and collapse into absolute lawlessness.

Without the active threat of “disorder,” the Christian nationalist argument for seizing institutional power and discarding pluralism loses its urgency.

Q: By employing the concept of disorder, what are Christian nationalists’ ultimate goals, and are these goals a threat to the existence of the United States of America in its current form?

A: By employing the concept of “disorder,” Christian nationalists establish a sense of existential urgency to justify their ultimate political and social goals.

The Ultimate Goals of Christian Nationalism

When Christian nationalists advocate for a return to “order,” their ultimate objectives involve a fundamental restructuring of American civic life:

- **Dismantling the Separation of Church and State:** The primary goal is to merge American identity with a specific conservative strain of Christian identity. This means codifying biblical principles into federal and state law, making the government an active defender of their specific theological values.

- **Enforcing Traditionalist Hierarchies:** They seek to legally restore what they view as the “natural order,” which includes strict patriarchal family structures, traditional gender roles, and the rolling back of civil protections for LGBTQ+ individuals.
- **Restricting Democratic Participation to “True Citizens”:** Sociological studies from organizations like the Kettering Foundation indicate that adherents often view civic participation as a privilege for those who fit the preferred cultural mold, rather than a right for all. This manifests in support for stricter voting limitations and the consolidation of executive power to bypass legislative gridlock.

Is This a Threat to the United States in Its Current Form?

Political scientists, legal scholars, and civil rights organizations widely agree that **yes, these goals present an existential threat to the United States as a pluralistic, constitutional democracy.**

If realized, these goals would fundamentally alter or dismantle the nation’s current framework in several key areas:

Core Pillar of the Modern U.S.	The Christian Nationalist Alternative	The Nature of the Threat
Pluralism & Equality	Civic privileges restricted to a preferred demographic.	Eradicates the constitutional ideal that American citizen ship is not predicated on faith or race.
Separation of Powers	Preference for a strong, authoritarian executive to enforce moral rule.	Dilutes the system of checks and balances, potentially legitimizing anti-democratic governance.
Religious Freedom	Legal codification of a specific interpretation of Christianity.	Restricts the liberties of non-Christians, secular citizens, and Christians who hold alternative theological views.

While mainstream Christian nationalists generally advocate for achieving these goals through existing political channels (such as judicial appointments, legislation, and curriculum changes in public schools), researchers warn that the framing of “disorder” as an existential emergency can also be used to justify political violence or the subversion of election outcomes when democratic processes do not yield their desired results.

Q: What can be done to combat the Christian nationalists’ goal of seizing power and destroying democracy, and assure the continuation of democracy in the United States?

A: Countering Christian nationalism and safeguarding constitutional democracy requires a coordinated, multi-front strategy. Because the movement operates at both the grassroots and federal level, experts, legal scholars, and faith leaders emphasize the following approaches:

1. Reclaiming Faith Boundaries (Intra-Christian Mobilization)

Because Christian nationalism wraps a specific political ideology in religious language, scholars note that the most effective counter-narratives come from within the Christian community itself.

- **Breaking the Silence:** Pro-democracy faith leaders emphasize that remaining quiet out of fear of division allows extremism to go unchecked. Programs like the Christians Against Christian Nationalism campaign, organized by the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty (BJC), mobilize Christians to explicitly name the ideology as a distortion of their faith.
- **Preaching the Whole Life of Jesus:** Scholars suggest countering the movement's focus on state power and coercion by actively teaching a "pluralistic Christianity" rooted in empathy, nonviolence, and care for the vulnerable.

2. Defending Local Civic Institutions

Christian nationalist groups often focus heavily on local governance to establish a foothold.

- **School Boards and Public Education:** Nationalists frequently target local school boards to mandate specific religious curricula or ban books. Countering this requires citizens to consistently show up to public school board and state education meetings to advocate for inclusive, secular public education.
- **Local Townships and State Legislatures:** Engaging in local mutual aid, supporting local nonpartisan journalism, and holding town halls helps rebuild deep, inclusive civic roots independent of ethno-racial boundaries.

3. Civil rights organizations work to protect the strict division of power mandated by the Constitution.

- **Enforcing the Separation of Church and State:** Legal organizations like Americans United for Separation of Church and State utilize the First Amendment to legally challenge state-sanctioned religious mandates, such as state laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms.
- **Protecting Voting Rights:** Because Christian nationalist rhetoric frequently underpins minority rule and voter suppression, maintaining democracy relies on legal battles to keep voting accessible, secure, and open to all citizens regardless of demographic markers.

4. Direct Community Engagement and De-escalation

Combating the ideology requires navigating interpersonal relationships where these ideas spread.

- **Avoiding Dehumanization:** Demoralizing or mocking adherents can harden their sense of victimization and backfire.
- **Using Strategic Dialogue:** One point of consensus among users on a Facebook discussion group for Episcopalians is that approaching individual adherents with curiosity, presenting real-world factual discrepancies gently, and maintaining firm personal boundaries can create the cognitive dissonance necessary for someone to question extreme views.

Q: What kinds of toolkits are available for starting these discussions in my own community?

A: Several non-profit organizations, legal advocacy groups, and faith-based coalitions offer specialized, downloadable toolkits to help you facilitate constructive local discussions about Christian nationalism. These toolkits provide step-by-step meeting agendas, messaging advice, and group discussion questions tailored to different audiences:

1. Faith-Based Discussion Toolkits

If you want to host conversations within a church, parish, or interfaith religious community, these resources focus on separating Christian theology from political extremism:

- **The Christians Against Christian Nationalism Host Guide:** Developed by Christian Against Christian Nationalism, this Meeting Toolkit is a 5-step church guide designed to help community leaders host local meetings. It includes promotional graphics, meeting checklists, and clear agendas that incorporate spiritual grounding alongside localized strategy sessions.
- **Multi-Session Curricular:** The same organization provides a 3-lesson curriculum called *Responding to Christian Nationalism*. It features PowerPoint templates, webinar video clips, and an interactive facilitator guide. They also offer a 10-part podcast discussion guide and specialized material on *How Racism Undergirds Christian Nationalism*.

2. Civic & Constitutional Advocacy Toolkits

If you are organizing a secular community group, neighborhood association, or a local advocacy hub, these guides focus on defending democratic norms and the Constitution:

- **Americans United (AU) Local Support Toolkit:** Americans United for Separation of Church and State features a brand-new toolkit titled *"Building local support for separation of church and state"*. This manual focuses heavily on effective public messaging, setting high-impact local goals, and learning how to draft op-eds or letters to the editor to counteract local religious extremist legislation.
- **AU Supporter Toolkit:** Accessible on the Americans United Supporter Toolkit platform, this guide outlines a 10-step plan to identify your specific regional goals, run public social media campaigns, host community gatherings, and safely practice self-care while dealing with highly polarized political debates.

3. If you want to bridge the gap across diverse political or non-religious demographics:

- **Interfaith Alliance Community Resource:** The Interfaith Alliance publishes a dedicated primer on recognizing Christian nationalism at the grassroots level. This toolkit focuses heavily on recognizing the warning signs of extremism in everyday public spaces, such as local school board meetings, town councils, and state legislature hearings. It offers language tools to help diverse groups voice objection uniformly while upholding the standard that true religious freedom protects people of all faiths and none.

Q: What else can I do as an individual to help combat Christian nationalism?

A: As an individual, you possess a surprising amount of leverage. Christian nationalism scales from the bottom up, meaning everyday individual actions are exactly what disrupt its momentum.

You can make a tangible impact right now through several direct actions:

1. Monitor and Report Local First Amendment Violations

Christian nationalism relies on gradually eroding the line between church and state in public institutions. You can act as a watchdog for your community:

- **Report Infractions:** If you notice state-funded public school classrooms requiring the display of the Ten Commandments, public money funneling directly to discriminatory private religious schools, or local town councils mandating sectarian prayers, document it.
- **Alert the Experts:** You can report these church-state violations directly to legal advocacy hubs like Americans United for Separation of Church and State (AU). They track regional data and frequently file lawsuits or send cease-and-desist letters to protect local separation of church and state.

2. Shift Your Focus to Hyper-Local Politics

Because national politics can feel gridlocked, extremist groups systematically focus on low-turnout local races to build power.

- **Attend Meetings:** Make it a priority to attend local school board meetings, city council sessions, or library trustee hearings. Christian nationalists often pack these rooms to ban books or change curricula. Simply showing up, asking logical questions, and providing a calm, pro-democracy presence can radically change the room's dynamic.
- **Vote in Off-Cycle Elections:** Vote in municipal, judicial, and state legislative elections. These are often decided by just a few hundred votes, yet state legislators hold the immense power to draft or block the laws driving Christian nationalist agendas.

3. Join Organized Anti-Nationalist Advocacy Networks

You do not have to invent a strategy from scratch. You can plug into pre-built national frameworks that send targeted, immediate action alerts:

- **Join the Action Network:** You can sign up for the AU Action Network. They send 6–12 highly specific emails a year notifying you of rapid-response actions you can take right from your phone, such as calling your representative to oppose private school vouchers or supporting federal religious freedom bills.
- **Find or Build a Local Chapter:** Check the maps on BJC (Baptist Joint Committee) to see if there is an active local *Christians Against Christian Nationalism* chapter in your area. If there isn't one, they provide the materials to help individuals start their own independent community groups.

4. Practice “De-Escalation Realism” in Personal Conversations

If you have friends, coworkers, or relatives leaning into Christian nationalist rhetoric, your personal proximity gives you unique influence that organizations lack.

- **Avoid the Trap of Direct Debates:** Experts in religious de-radicalization suggest that aggressively debating political values or screaming facts usually causes individuals to double down on their sense of victimization.
- **De-escalate and Pivot:** If a relative brings up an extreme talking point, say something gentle but firm like: *“I think you and I probably have a different perspective on that, and that’s okay,”* and redirect the conversation. Research suggests that keeping the interpersonal relationship intact is critical; if they later begin to doubt or question their views, they will feel safe approaching you rather than retreating deeper into an echo chamber.

“Democracy is not a state. It is an act, and each generation must do its part to help build what we called the Beloved Community, a nation and world society at peace with itself.”

— John Lewis, Civil Rights leader and U.S. Congressman.