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CHRISTIAN AMERICANISM AND TEXAS POLITICS SINCE 2008

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Section 1: Mapping the Territory

As the United States has grown more ethnically and religiously diverse in recent decades, calls for the nation to return to its allegedly Christian essence have become increasingly common, and increasingly vociferous, among conservatives. “In homes and schools across the land, it’s time for Christians to take a stand. This is not a nation established on the principles of Buddha or Hinduism. Our faith is not Islam. What we follow is not the Koran but the Bible. This is a Christian nation,” declared Alabama Chief Justice (and later unsuccessful Senate candidate) Roy Moore in 2002.¹ Amateur historian and GOP activist David Barton, who has called the separation of church and state a “myth,” further declares that “Our [Founding] Fathers intended that this nation should be a Christian nation, not because all who lived in it were Christians, but because it was founded on and would be governed and guided by Christian principles.”²

These assertions exemplify a religio-political ideology known as *Christian nationalism* or *Christian Americanism*, the term I adopt here, since it captures the ideology’s core objective, an explicitly Christian America. As religious studies scholar Mark Chancey writes, proponents of Christian Americanism believe that “America was founded to be a Christian nation governed by Bible-based laws, that the country has tragically departed from its roots, and that it should reclaim its Christian heritage.”³ Reclaiming that heritage typically involves giving preferential treatment in law and public policy to the “Judeo-Christian tradition” or “Judeo-Christian values,” code words for conservative Christian teachings and values.⁴ As philosopher Mark Weldon Whitten writes, “The notion that our nation was founded primarily and directly upon the Christian religion as a specifically Christian nation is used by members of the Religious Right . . . to justify maintenance or pursuit of a socially and governmentally preferred and privileged position within society of (some fundamentalist/evangelical) Christianity over other religions and nonreligious citizens.”⁵ Sociologists Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry make a similar point:

Christian nationalism idealizes a mythic society in which *real* Americans—white, native-born, mostly Protestants—maintain control over access to society’s social, cultural, and political institutions, and “others” remain in their proper place. It therefore seeks strong boundaries to separate “us” from “them,” preserving privilege for its rightful recipients while equating racial and religious outsiders with criminality, violence, and inferiority.⁶

In other words, the Christian Americanist ideology consists of two related parts, one historical and one normative. The first involves the historical claim that the founders intended to create a nation that would be guided by Christian beliefs; the second is constituted by the normative claim that law and public policy today should once again be governed by Christian teaching. Both claims are typically associated with the assertion that church-state separation is, as Barton labels it, a “myth.”

Long a powerful force in national politics, Christian Americanism has also had an active and visible presence in Texas politics in recent decades. The ideology forms part of the official platform of the Texas Republican Party, which has controlled all three branches of state government since 2003.⁷ Prominent GOP lawmakers such as former Governor Rick Perry and current Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick have voiced Christian Americanist sentiments.⁸ However, the ideology's precise role and influence in Texas remains understudied.

This report seeks to lay the groundwork for more comprehensive study by identifying the major religious and political proponents of Christian Americanism in Texas since 2008 and how they promote the ideology. The goal is to map the territory of Christian Americanism in Texas, and thus serve as a guide for further exploration of this important topic.

America's Religious Founding: History versus Myth

Although Christian Americanists like Barton label church-state separation as a “myth,” what is mythical is the Christian Americanist narrative itself, according to several noted historians. In *Inventing a Christian America*, historian Steven K. Green demonstrates that both the Constitution and America's new government were widely seen—and indeed, criticized by leading clergy—as irreligious in the late eighteenth century: “few in the first generation would have viewed America as a ‘Christian nation,’ insofar as that term implied that the government was specially ordained by God or founded on Christian principles.”⁹ It was not until the early 1800s, Green argues, that the myth of America's religious founding was constructed, with the aim of creating a national identity conforming to the creators' political aspirations as well as religious sentiments shaped by the Second Great Awakening, a wave of evangelical fervor that swept over U.S. Protestant denominations in the early nineteenth century.¹⁰ In this myth-making process, the religiously neutral Constitution was “sanctified,” and “the Founders emerged . . . as scribes, divinely inspired to draft a frame of government as directed by God's providential hand.”¹¹

Historian Kevin Kruse alternatively locates the rise of the Christian America myth in the period from the 1930s through the 1950s. Kruse shows how an alliance of corporate executives, conservative clergy, and Republican politicians developed the myth of a Christian nation initially as a vehicle for attacking the New Deal and later as a response to fears of “godless communism.” In the process, they managed to “convinc[e] a wide range of Americans that America had been, and should always be, a Christian nation.”¹² Green's and Kruse's accounts are not mutually exclusive; the narrative of America's religious founding may well have originated in the early 1800s and then undergone a resurgence in the mid-twentieth century. Regardless, the work of both historians demonstrates that the Christian Americanist narrative is at least historically questionable and possibly more fictive than factual.

Although a comprehensive examination of Christian Americanist historiography lies outside the scope of this report, it may be helpful to take a brief look at how Christian Americanists use history—or, some academic historians would say, misuse it—to support their vision of the nation's allegedly Christian nature.¹³

The production of Christian Americanist histories (to use the term generously) has become something of a “cottage industry” in recent decades.¹⁴ In a comprehensive study, religion scholar Stephen M. Stookey discusses some of the major advocates and producers of Christian Americanist histories, including Rus Walton, Peter Marshall Jr., John Eidsmoe, and Tim LaHaye.¹⁵ As Stookey notes, however, David Barton is “arguably the foremost proponent” of such history.¹⁶ In general, Barton’s approach to the religious founding narrative illustrates Christian Americanist historiography.

Barton asserts that “there is no dispute that we were founded as a nation [that] was using the Bible as a guidebook for much and most of what we did.”¹⁷ Claims to the contrary, he contends, are rooted in “the nation’s widespread lack of knowledge about America’s history and foundation.”¹⁸ This allegedly indisputable historical record has been ignored or suppressed by historical “revisionists” and activist court judges.

Barton’s overall historical argument is evident in his books, *The Myth of Separation* and *Original Intent*.¹⁹ Marshaling an arsenal of quotes, writings, and court opinions, he argues that the founders intended the U.S. to be a Christian nation and that their intent was largely followed by the courts for most of the country’s history. However, he suggests that the courts have departed from the founders’ intent since 1947. There are three main parts to his argument: the founders were orthodox and devoted Christians; the Constitution is an implicitly Christian document; and the founders did not intend the First Amendment to separate church and state or promote religious pluralism.

First, Barton contends that it is “unreasonable to imagine” that the founders sought to separate church and state or to establish anything other than a Christian nation, because they were not only “highly religious” men but also “good *Christian* politicians.”²⁰ As evidence, he offers a string of isolated quotes from various founders; their cumulative effect, he contends, is to “refute any notion that the Founding Fathers were atheists, agnostics, or deists, or that they wanted to divorce religious principles from public affairs.”²¹

The second step in Barton’s argument is to prove that the Constitution, which is devoid of references to a deity and was criticized during and after ratification as irreligious, is in fact a thoroughly Christian document. Here Barton uses a method that Stookey finds common among Christian America apologists, which is tying the Constitution to earlier documents that do contain religious language or seem to endorse religion. According to Barton, the Constitution cannot be understood apart from the Declaration of Independence, which mentions a “Creator” and “Nature’s God.”²² Similarly, he contends that the 1787 Northwest Ordinance, which states that religion is “necessary to good government,” constitutes “strong proof” that the Founders had no intention of separating “Christianity from public affairs.”²³

The third step in Barton's argument is to show that the First Amendment's establishment clause—"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion"—was not meant to separate church and state. He appeals to the fact that most states at the time had religious tests for public office:

The Constitutional delegates had voluntarily subscribed themselves to the requirements of their own state's constitution regarding public service. These men had with their own lips confessed their belief in God, His Son, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Divine inspiration of the Old and New Testaments, and that there existed future rewards and punishments. They would have had to deny their own personal affirmations to allow the First Amendment to reverse the practice common throughout the states.²⁴

When these "good Christian politicians" used the term "religion" in the First Amendment, Barton contends, they meant "Christian denomination"; accordingly, "we would best understand the actual context of the First Amendment by saying, 'Congress shall make no law establishing one Christian denomination as the national denomination.'"²⁵ Moreover, the founders "never intended the First Amendment to become a vehicle to promote a pluralism of other religions," or to protect atheists and secular humanists.²⁶

Numerous scholars have criticized Barton's historiography and that of other Christian Americanists.²⁷ An especially thorough analysis and critique is Stookey's two-part study, "In God We Trust? Evangelical Historiography and the Quest for a Christian America." Stookey writes that the historiographical methodology of Christian Americanists like Barton

begins with the presupposition that America was, is, and should continue to be a Christian nation. This historiographic eisegesis²⁸ results in a system that avoids engaging in critical scholarship, emphasizes material favorable to their presuppositions, ignores difficult or contrary material, superimposes preconceived interpretations upon documents, perpetuates mythical and questionable events, and presumes an inerrant understanding of America's history and the original intent of the Constitution.²⁹

Stookey addresses all three of the steps in Barton's argument (though with reference to Christian Americanist histories generally as well). The founders, Stookey writes, were not the "good Christian politicians" Barton would have us believe, but "a varied collection of orthodox Christians, nominal church attenders, Christian moralists, Deists, and nonbelievers."³⁰ Christian Americanists' "presuppositional methodology . . . creates a skewed view of the Founders' religious convictions," such as interpreting "generic references to religion...as specific references to Christianity,"³¹ and the use of "fallacious quotations, quotations void of context, questionable pious events, and questionable sources."³² An example is Barton's use of a John Adams quote, "Without religion this world would be something not fit to be mentioned in polite company, I mean hell." While "Barton allows the reader to view Adams' use of the generic term 'religion' as orthodox, evangelical Christianity," Stookey writes, the full context of the quote suggests something quite different: Adams objects to the orthodox doctrine of original sin and advances a very

counter-evangelical view of religion “centered in conscience and morality rather than the person and work of Jesus Christ.”³³

Stookey is equally critical of Christian Americanist treatment of the founding documents. “Each document is approached with a presumed interpretation, and the legislative history behind the document is either ignored or manipulated” to support the “preferred interpretation.”³⁴ This includes interpreting “religious language in these documents as specifically related to Christianity and in no way related to the taint of Deism,” when in fact “both secular and religious elements were present and able to forge a consensus in the drafting process—utilizing language to appease devout Christians, marginal Christians, non-Christians, and Enlightenment thinkers.”³⁵ Christian Americanist accounts of the Northwest Ordinance not only overlook the fact that the ordinance specifically protected religious liberty in the territory, but they also ignore the legislative history, which included “heated debates” over government support for religion.³⁶ Similarly, Christian Americanist portrayals of the Constitution as inherently religious gloss over “the level of aggressive opposition . . . among Christians due to its lack of religious language or affirmations of God” during and after ratification.³⁷

As for the First Amendment, Stookey addresses Barton’s arguments specifically. First, Barton’s claim that the First Amendment’s establishment clause was intended only to prevent an official Christian denomination is “not consonant with the record” of the amendment’s legislative history; Stookey points out that several earlier drafts of the amendment that made Barton’s denominational reading explicit were rejected.³⁸ Additionally, James Madison held that the First Amendment should apply to all religions, not just Christianity.³⁹ Second, as Stookey notes, Barton and other Christian American advocates fail to acknowledge “the gradual cleansing of religious restrictions in state constitutions during and just after the drafting of the First Amendment. If the state constitutions are seen as normative for interpreting the original intent, then does the intent change as states eliminated religious restrictions for public office and preferential status for Christianity?”⁴⁰

Overall, Stookey writes, Christian Americanism’s “historiographic eisegesis is its Achilles heel. This methodology has fostered inadequate historical research, reliance upon questionable sources, skewed logic, and faulty conclusions.”⁴¹ Like Green and Kruse, Stookey concludes that the Christian Americanist account of the nation’s religious founding is itself a “myth,” one that “does not stand the test of objective, critical historiography.”⁴²

A Potent Political Force

Whatever the origins and historiographical problems of the religious founding narrative, Christian Americanism has been a major force in national politics for nearly half a century. During the 1970s and 1980s, it was one of the major tributaries feeding the rise of the religious right, and its core tenets later came to dominate the Republican Party. According to religion scholar Richard T. Hughes, religious right leaders like Jerry Falwell, James Dobson, and Pat Robertson “summoned America to return to its alleged Christian roots in the hope that the United States might become a Christian nation once again.”⁴³ They

sought to realize this goal by electing candidates at all levels of government who “would pass laws in sync with a Christian vision for America,” including legislation supporting school prayer, promoting creationism in public classrooms, banning abortion, and generally opposing diversity and pluralism.⁴⁴

Kruse traces the roots of Christian Americanist domination of the Republican Party to Ronald Reagan’s calculated outreach to Christian conservatives in 1980. He points to Reagan’s frequent references during the 1980 and 1984 campaigns to the U.S. as a “nation under God,” rhetoric that was later adopted by George H.W. Bush and Bob Dole in their subsequent presidential runs.⁴⁵ Yet with due respect to Kruse, this rhetoric was vague and not explicitly Christian, and it could be read as appealing to American civil religion rather than Christian Americanism per se. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Reagan’s criticism of the Supreme Court rulings banning school prayer and Bible readings, and his repeated calls for Congress to pass a constitutional amendment allowing school prayer, appealed to religious right activists seeking to return America to its supposedly Christian roots.⁴⁶

Furthermore, Kruse notes, “the Republican Party became increasingly Christianized” in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Pat Robertson’s “Christian Coalition” strongly influenced the 1992 Republican National Convention, pushing through additions to the party platform that referenced “our country’s Judeo-Christian heritage’ and [called] for the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools ‘as a reminder of the principles that sustain us as one Nation under God.’”⁴⁷ Additionally, David Barton founded the Texas-based advocacy organization WallBuilders in 1989 to promote the narrative of America’s Christian founding and to contest the “myth” of church-state separation.⁴⁸ As Hughes notes, “Barton’s influence has extended far beyond Texas.”⁴⁹ In 2004, Barton was on the salary of the Republican National Committee, and former Kansas Governor Sam Brownback has said that he provided “the philosophical underpinning for a lot of the Republican effort in the country” in recent years.⁵⁰

By the early 2000s, religious right activists “effectively controlled the Republican Party, the House of Representatives, and the Senate,” and “were well on their way toward transforming the United States into their version of Christian America.”⁵¹ For instance, presidential hopeful John McCain, in a 2008 address at Falwell’s Liberty University, declared that “the Constitution established the United States of America as a Christian nation,” and presidential candidate Mitt Romney later claimed that the Constitution rests on a “foundation of faith.”⁵²

Christian Americanism continues to play “a large, unique, but often unrecognized (and at times, *mis*recognized) role in our nation’s current cultural and political conflicts,” as noted by Whitehead and Perry.⁵³ A recent study found that Christian nationalist belief was the strongest religious predictor of whether an individual would vote for President Donald Trump in 2016, and a 2018 poll of nearly 1,000 Southerners “found that half of residents either agree or strongly agree that America was founded as an explicitly Christian nation.”⁵⁴

Another way that Christian Americanism has made its presence felt nationwide is through the work of Project Blitz, a concerted effort to push state legislatures to enact measures that “recognize the place of Christian principles in our nation’s history and heritage” and that promote “biblical values concerning marriage and sexuality.”⁵⁵ Project Blitz was launched in 2015 under the auspices of the Virginia-based Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation in partnership with David Barton’s WallBuilders and the National Legal Foundation, of which Barton is a board member.⁵⁶ In a 2018 article, I described Project Blitz as “as a covert campaign for conservative Christian dominion over law and public policy.”⁵⁷ It has become far more visible recently, thanks to reports in the national media.⁵⁸

Besides organizing “prayer caucuses” in state legislatures around the country, Project Blitz published legislative playbooks in 2017 and 2018.⁵⁹ These documents provide a game plan for promoting a Christian Americanist agenda in state legislatures and include model bills that state legislators can customize for their own legislative contexts. Frederick Clarkson, senior research analyst at the social justice think tank Political Research Associates, notes that the model bills “range widely in content—from requiring public schools to display the national motto, ‘In God We Trust’ (IGWT); to legalizing discrimination against LGBTQ people; to religious exemptions regarding women’s reproductive health.”⁶⁰ According to a study by the left-leaning Americans United for Separation of Church and State, 76 measures identical or similar to Project Blitz model bills were introduced in state legislatures nationwide in 2018.⁶¹

Christian Americanism has also had an active presence in Texas politics for at least the past two decades. As I noted in my Baker Institute report, *Religious Imbalance in the Texas Social Studies Curriculum*, Christian Americanists on the State Board of Education shaped the public school social studies curriculum to promote their ideology in 2009 and 2010, resulting in an overemphasis on Christianity and a pronounced imbalance in the coverage of religions.⁶² As noted earlier, Christian Americanism has been the official position of the Texas Republican Party since 2004, which has controlled all three branches of state government to date. For instance, the 2004 state party platform affirmed that “the United States of America is a Christian nation, and the public acknowledgement of God is undeniable in our history. Our nation was founded on fundamental Judeo-Christian principles based on the Holy Bible.”⁶³ Although this changed in 2008 to the less explicit affirmation that “America is a nation under God founded on Judeo-Christian principles,”⁶⁴ that year’s platform also contained the Christian Americanist claim that “Judeo-Christian principles” are “the basis of America’s legal, political and economic systems.” The 2008 platform also pledged to use the party’s “influence toward a return to the original intent of the First Amendment and toward dispelling the myth of separation of church and state.”⁶⁵ Prominent Texas GOP lawmakers have also expressed Christian Americanist sentiments. For example, while still a state senator, current Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick told the Senate, “We are a Judeo-Christian nation, primarily a Christian nation.” He also told a Baptist congregation in Conroe that “there is no such thing as separation of church and state.”⁶⁶

A Need for Further Study

Despite the ideology's prominent role in national political life, Christian Americanism remains largely understudied, although the body of scholarly literature on the topic is growing.⁶⁷ This lack of scholarly attention is also true in the Texas context, with the notable exception of how Christian Americanism has influenced the state's public school curriculum. For example, scholars such as Chancey and I have demonstrated how the Christian Americanist sentiments of the Texas State Board of Education have shaped the public school social studies curriculum.⁶⁸

The paucity of scholarly investigation is especially surprising since the ideology poses a clear challenge to separation of church and state, as well as the rights of minorities (religious and secular), who could become second-class citizens in the nation that Christian Americanists envision. As Whitehead and Perry contend, strong support for Christian nationalism, which entails viewing nonreligious and non-Christian Americans as “fundamentally deficient,” is “without doubt . . . a threat to a pluralistic democratic society,” since it “ultimately desires the silencing and exclusion of its opponents in the public sphere.”⁶⁹ Given Christian Americanism's pervasive presence in Texas politics, and its ramifications for church-state separation and the rights of religious and nonreligious minorities, there is a serious need for research that gives a clearer picture of the role, influence, and implications of this ideology in Texas politics.

This report takes steps toward rectifying the gap in the scholarly literature. It lays the groundwork for a more comprehensive study by addressing the following questions:

- Who are the major religious and political proponents of Christian Americanism in Texas?
- What means do they use to promote the ideology?
- What is the current state of scholarly literature on Christian Americanism in general and in Texas specifically?

In order to keep the study manageable, I focus on the period from 2008 to the present.

Defining Terms

For the purposes of this investigation, Christian Americanism will be understood according to Chancey's definition, set out earlier in this report, as the belief that “America was founded to be a Christian nation governed by Bible-based laws”; that it “has tragically departed from its roots”; and that “it should reclaim its Christian heritage,” meaning that Christian/biblical teaching should receive preferential treatment in law and public policy.

Before moving to the substance of the study, Christian Americanism must be distinguished from three other related concepts: American civil religion, dominionism, and Christian Reconstructionism.

Christian Americanism versus American Civil Religion

The notion of an American civil religion originates with sociologist Robert Bellah. In a 1967 essay, he identified American civil religion as a “public religious dimension . . . expressed in a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals” that “at its best is a genuine apprehension of universal and transcendent religious reality as seen in or, one could almost say, as revealed through the experience of the American people.”⁷⁰ Bellah also noted that though much of this civil religion “is selectively derived from Christianity, [it] is clearly not itself Christianity.”⁷¹ As political scientists Kenneth Wald and Allison Calhoun-Brown point out, civil religion “is neither the religion of a particular church nor, at the other extreme, a fully articulated religion that competes with existing denominations.”⁷² Instead, it is “a code subscribed to in varying degrees by all religions in the nation.”⁷³ Wald and Calhoun Brown further note that “by imparting a sacred character to the nation, civil religion enables people of diverse faiths to harmonize their religious and political beliefs.”⁷⁴

Some aspects of Christian Americanism clearly overlap with American civil religion. For example, attempts to promote the motto “In God We Trust” in governmental and public education settings, a cause some Christian Americanists espouse, would seem to advance a theism that transcends many (though not all) religions.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, Christian Americanism differs from American civil religion in its essentially Christian content. The Christian Americanist elevation of Christian teaching and the “Judeo-Christian heritage” would seem to block those outside the Jewish and Christian traditions from “harmonizing” their own beliefs with the America envisioned by Christian Americanists. Though many Christian Americanists advocate references to “God” in official discourse, merely invoking “God” in a speech or calling for “God-talk” in the public square does not *necessarily* indicate Christian Americanism: it may signify nothing more than adherence to American civil religion.

Christian Americanism versus Dominionism and Christian Reconstructionism

While the distinction between Christian Americanism and American civil religion is relatively straightforward, it is more difficult to differentiate Christian Americanism from dominionism and Christian Reconstructionism. The challenge stems partly from the overlap between the three ideological positions, and partly from some confusion in the concept of dominionism itself.

“Put simply, Dominionism means that Christians have a God-given right to rule all earthly institutions,” writes Michelle Goldberg.⁷⁶ She quotes George Grant, the former executive director of Coral Ridge Ministries (which later changed its name to Truth in Action Ministries): “Christians have an obligation, a mandate, a commission, a holy responsibility to reclaim the land for Jesus Christ—to have dominion in civil structures, just as in every other aspect of life and godliness. . . . It is dominion we are after . . . World conquest.”⁷⁷ Elsewhere Goldberg argues that dominionism “is derived from a theocratic sect called Christian Reconstructionism, which advocates replacing American civil law with Old Testament biblical law.”⁷⁸

Frederick Clarkson describes dominionism as “the theocratic idea that . . . Christians are called by God to exercise dominion over every aspect of society by taking control of political and cultural institutions.” Clarkson notes that dominionists have three common characteristics: “They believe that the United States once was, and should again be, a Christian nation”; they “promote religious supremacy, insofar as they generally do not respect the equality of other religions”; and they “endorse theocratic visions, insofar as they believe that the Ten Commandments, or ‘biblical law,’ should be the foundation of American law and that the U.S. Constitution should be seen as a vehicle for implementing biblical principles.”⁷⁹

Whereas Goldberg traces dominionism to Christian Reconstructionism, Clarkson writes that Christian Reconstructionism is one of two “streams” or expressions of dominionism, the other being Seven Mountains Dominionism.⁸⁰ Christian Reconstructionism was founded by the late R.J. Rushdoony and “advances the idea that Christians must not only dominate society, but institute and enforce Old Testament biblical law.”⁸¹ As Julie J. Ingersoll writes, Christian Reconstructionists like Rushdoony and Gary North “articulated a theological system called theonomy, which was based on the view that God’s law, contained in the Bible, was applicable to all areas of life—not the least of which is civil government.” Ingersoll further notes that “reconstructionists seek to build an America that is distinctly different from the one we live in now,” and that “they want to organize every aspect of culture and society”—including government—“to conform to what they understand to be biblical law.”⁸² William Martin summarizes Rushdoony’s vision of a Christian Reconstructionist America:

The federal government would play no role in regulating business, public education, or welfare. . . . Some government would be visible at the level of counties, each of which would be protected by a fully armed militia, but citizens would be answerable to church authorities on most matters subject to regulation. . . . Public schools would be abolished in favor of home-schooling arrangements, and families would operate on a strict patriarchal pattern. The only people permitted to vote would be members of “biblically correct” churches. Most notably, a theonomic order would make homosexuality, adultery, blasphemy, propagation of false doctrine, and incorrigible behavior by disobedient children subject to the death penalty, preferably administered by stoning.⁸³

Clearly Christian Americanism and Christian Reconstructionism share the broad goal of a Christian nation. However, the Christian Reconstructionist vision of America governed by a biblical theonomy⁸⁴ exceeds the less sharply defined Christian Americanist goal of reclaiming America’s allegedly Christian heritage.

The second stream Clarkson identifies, Seven Mountains Dominionism, is associated with a Pentecostal movement called the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR).⁸⁵ Seven Mountains Dominionism holds that Christians must take control of seven “mountains,” or areas of life: “family, religion, education, media, entertainment, business, and government.”⁸⁶ Rafael Cruz and David Barton, both of whom are profiled in Section 2 of this report, are Seven

Mountains Dominionists, and former Texas Governor Rick Perry has ties to the NAR (though those ties remain somewhat ambiguous, as I will discuss in Section 2).

Seven Mountains Dominionists clearly share the Christian Americanist goal of Christian domination of law and public policy. However, one can be a Christian Americanist (as I am defining it in this report) without subscribing to the full-blown Seven Mountains vision of theocratic domination of all areas of life.

There is some uncertainty in the literature as to what the category *dominionism* itself means and encompasses. In earlier writings, Clarkson divides dominionism into two varieties, which he labels “hard” and “soft.” “The seminal form of Hard Dominionism,” Clarkson writes, “is Christian Reconstructionism, which seeks to replace secular governance, and subsequently the U.S. Constitution, with a political and judicial system based on Old Testament Law, or Mosaic Law.”⁸⁷ Soft dominionists, on the other hand, “propose a form of Christian nationalism that stops short of a codified legal theocracy. They may embrace a flat tax of 10 percent whose origins they place in the Bible. They are comfortable with little or no separation of church and state, seeing the secular state as eroding the place of the church in society.”⁸⁸ Furthermore, “in its ‘softest’ form,” Clarkson writes, dominionism is “the belief that ‘America is a Christian Nation,’ and that Christians need to re-assert control over political and cultural institutions.”⁸⁹ In this sense, Christian Americanism, as used in this report, equates to Clarkson’s “soft dominionism.”

In short, dominionism and Christian Reconstructionism are closely related to Christian Americanism but not identical to it, with the exception of Clarkson’s “soft dominionism.” For the purposes of the present work, I will generally avoid the terms “dominionism” and “Christian Reconstructionism” except where they are accurate and helpful (as in identifying Gary North as a Christian Reconstructionist, or Barton and Rafael Cruz as Seven Mountains Dominionists).

With these categorical clarifications established, the next sections in this series will identify the major religious and political proponents of the ideology in Texas (Section 2) and the means they use to promote it (Section 3), as well as summarize preliminary findings and suggest directions for future research (Section 4).

Section 2: Major Proponents of Christian Americanism in Texas

As mentioned previously, the present work represents the initial phase of a larger research project aimed at shedding light on the role and influence of Christian Americanism in Texas politics. A critical first step in that effort is to identify the major proponents of the ideology in Texas, who lead the movement to “restore” the nation to its allegedly Christian essence. As sociologist Michael DeCesare writes, “Understanding leaders . . . is crucial to understanding the trajectory of [social] movements,” since “leaders inspire, motivate, and sometimes directly organize a movement’s participants; they represent and frame a movement’s messages and goals; they mobilize resources, and create and exploit opportunities. . . . Leaders, in short, often personify their movement.”⁹⁰

This is very much the case with regard to Christian Americanism in Texas. Just as the rise of the religious right in the 1980s and 1990s cannot be understood without reference to movement leaders like Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, James Robison, and Ralph Reed, Christian Americanism cannot be understood as a force in recent Texas politics apart from the religious and political figures who promote it, frame the movement’s message and goals, and inspire and motivate their followers. Indeed, the movement’s leaders may well be more important than those in other conservative movements. A recent Woodrow Wilson Foundation study found that most Texans lack basic knowledge about their nation’s history, a deficiency they share with most Americans.⁹¹ If this is indeed the case, most Texans lack the tools to critically evaluate Christian Americanist claims about the nation’s allegedly religious founding. By promoting a simplistic narrative that legitimates conservative Christian dominance of government and public policy, the leading figures of Christian Americanism in Texas play a crucial role in shaping notions about America’s founding, the intentions behind the Constitution, and the “true” meaning of the First Amendment’s religion clauses.

The object of this section is to construct a preliminary “*dramatis personae*” of Christian Americanism in Texas since 2008—that is, to identify and profile the major figures promoting the ideology in Texas. It will also describe the extent to which each figure appears to embrace the ideology.

Determining who qualifies as a leader of Christian Americanism in Texas, however, is not as straightforward as it might seem. The task of identifying proponents of the movement faces four main challenges. First, unlike a political party, there is no overarching Christian Americanist organization that encompasses all followers, and no single platform or set of principles to which adherents must subscribe. Instead, Christian Americanism functions as an ideological tendency within the broader Christian right. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify Christian Americanists by their statements, the positions they take on cultural and political issues, and to some extent, their association with other Christian Americanists.

Second, while nongovernmental activists often make their support for Christian Americanism quite clear, politicians who express Christian Americanist sentiments or deploy its rhetoric are often vague (perhaps intentionally so) about the degree to which they embrace the ideology. Their public statements are frequently long on assertions that government should follow biblical teachings or honor “Judeo-Christian values,” but short on specifics about how they would translate those teachings and values into public policy. For instance, Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick has claimed that the United States was founded on the Bible and that government policy should be “biblically based.”⁹² Yet since taking the state’s second highest office, he has (to my knowledge) never specified precisely how his support for a biblical perspective in governance motivates support for specific legislation. To cite one prominent example, during the 2017 debate over the bathroom bill (which would have prohibited transgender persons from using restrooms corresponding to their gender identity), Patrick appears never to have justified the bill on biblical grounds; instead he couched it in terms of “safety” and “privacy,” relied on catchphrases (“men in women’s restrooms”) appealing to conservative Christians who believe gender is divinely assigned in the womb, and left more explicitly biblical arguments to conservative pastors and other activists.⁹³ One possible explanation for this approach, involving the concept of symbolic boundaries, will be discussed in Section 4 of this report.

Third, in the case of some political figures, it is difficult to determine whether their statements amount to an endorsement of Christian Americanism or fall instead into the more general category of American civil religion.⁹⁴ As discussed below, this uncertainty applies to Texas Governor Greg Abbott and, to an extent, political commentator Glenn Beck. Fourth, links between politicians and explicitly Christian Americanist activists such as David Barton or Steve Hotze are frequently unclear. The connections are often visible only in campaign contributions, campaign endorsements, or the fact that these politicians speak at the same gatherings as more clearly identifiable Christian Americanists.

Given these difficulties, this study will use the following standard for identifying Christian Americanist figures. To count as a Christian Americanist, an activist or officeholder must do more than merely declare their affiliation with Christianity (since one can be a Christian without embracing Christian Americanism) or use God-language in public addresses (since such language may merely reveal allegiance to American civil religion). Instead, they must make statements that indicate or at least suggest agreement with all or a substantial part of Chancey’s definition of Christian Americanism, set out earlier in this report as the belief that: “America was founded to be a Christian nation governed by Bible-based laws”; “the country has tragically departed from its roots”; and “it should reclaim its Christian heritage,” which typically involves giving Christian or biblical teaching preferential treatment in law and public policy.⁹⁵

The figures profiled here fall into two categories: (a) activists who do not hold public office, and (b) politicians and lawmakers. My intent here is not to critique the views of the figures profiled below; that is work for a future project. I endeavor only to identify the major proponents of Christian Americanism in Texas, demonstrate how their public statements and political activities show their alignment with the ideology, and indicate their political involvement and influence.

Nongovernmental Activists

This subsection profiles 12 of the most prominent Christian Americanist activists in Texas outside of government: amateur historian David Barton, author and media personality Glenn Beck, self-described “political operative” David Lane, doctor and activist Steve Hotze, economist Gary North, oil and gas developer Tim Dunn, billionaires Dan and Farris Wilks, and pastors Rafael Cruz, Robert Jeffress, Dave Welch, and John Hagee.

David Barton and WallBuilders

We met amateur historian and Republican activist Barton in Section 1. Historian John Fea describes him as “one of the country’s foremost proponents of the theory that America is a Christian nation.”⁹⁶ In 2005, Barton was named one of *Time’s* 25 most influential evangelicals in America.⁹⁷ He served as vice chair of the Texas Republican Party from 1997 to 2006.⁹⁸ In 2015 and 2016, he headed the “Keep the Promise” PAC in support of Texas Senator Ted Cruz’s ultimately unsuccessful presidential bid.⁹⁹ Barton also appears to have adopted Seven Mountains Dominionism, which advocates Christian domination of government and other social and cultural institutions.¹⁰⁰

According to his biography, Barton’s “exhaustive research” on America’s founding period has rendered him an expert in historical and constitutional issues and he serves as a consultant to state and federal legislators, has participated in several cases at the Supreme Court, was involved in the development of the History/Social Studies standards for states such as Texas and California, and has helped produce history textbooks now used in schools across the nation.¹⁰¹

Christian conservative and one-time presidential hopeful Mike Huckabee has said: “I almost wish that there would be . . . a simultaneous telecast, and all Americans would be forced—forced at gunpoint no less—to listen to every David Barton message, and I think our country would be better for it.”¹⁰²

Many other observers offer a less enthusiastic assessment of Barton's work. Religion scholar Mark Chancey describes Barton as

a prolific creator of resources extolling the Christian virtues and aspirations of America's Founding Fathers and a much sought-after speaker for conferences and workshops. With only a bachelor's degree in religious education from Oral Roberts University, he has no credentials in history beyond his extensive personal collection of early American documents. Academic and political critics routinely fault his work for misrepresenting or even inventing quotations from the Founding Fathers, ignoring evidence that undermines his own views, and demonstrating a general lack of understanding of historical method and the early American context.¹⁰³

University of Colorado historian Paul Harvey calls Barton an "ideological entrepreneur" and "the house historian" of the Tea Party, and writes that he "has developed a one-man heritage industry out of his insistence that the founding fathers had created America as a Christian nation."¹⁰⁴ Harvey explains that "Barton's stock-in-trade is to take complicated, messy historical pasts and transform them, John Bunyan-like, into straightforward Christian narratives that meet the needs of the Christian heritage industry."¹⁰⁵ The result is "a selective, distorted, but emotionally compelling story of the heroism of the sainted fathers (and mothers) of the past."¹⁰⁶ Peter Montgomery describes Barton's approach as "historical revisionism," and notes that though Barton's historical claims "have been widely discredited," he "remains influential within the Religious Right and the GOP."¹⁰⁷ Barton's 2012 book *The Jefferson Lies*, which argues that the third president did not intend church and state to be separate, was withdrawn by publisher Thomas Nelson after widespread complaints about inaccuracies, and the book has the dubious honor of being named "the least credible history book in print" in a 2012 poll by the History News Network.¹⁰⁸

Barton heads the Texas-based nonprofit WallBuilders, one of the power centers of Christian Americanism. According to its website, the organization is "dedicated to presenting America's forgotten history and heroes, with an emphasis on the moral, religious, and constitutional foundation on which America was built—a foundation which, in recent years, has been seriously attacked and undermined."¹⁰⁹ Its goal "is to exert a direct and positive influence in government, education, and the family by (1) educating the nation concerning the Godly foundation of our country; (2) providing information to federal, state, and local officials as they develop public policies which reflect Biblical values; and (3) encouraging Christians to be involved in the civic arena."¹¹⁰ In the service of the first goal, Wallbuilders "develop[s] materials to educate the public concerning the periods in our country's history when its laws and policies were firmly rooted in Biblical principles."¹¹¹

Barton, however, is after more than simply getting the history "right." WallBuilders also works to change public policy: "We believe that as citizens learn the truth about our nation's past, they will be better equipped to help frame its future and to help shape the policies under which they will live. Toward this end, WallBuilders is an educational resource to those working toward improving federal, state and local policies," including "consulting with both legislators and judges, at their request, on legal and historical issues, testifying in state and federal hearings, providing research services, identifying and

supporting sound legislation, and providing historical perspectives to current problems.”¹¹² Barton also served as an expert advisor in the 2010 revision of the Texas public school curriculum standards for social studies, and he played a key role in giving those standards a Christian Americanist slant.¹¹³

In sermons and speeches, Barton makes his case for a Christian America with breathless, headlong, rapid-fire delivery, bombarding the audience with so many names, dates, and quotes (drawn from various periods in American history as well as the Bible) that one can hardly get a thought in edgewise.¹¹⁴ A good example is his 2010 talk “Is America a Christian Nation?,” available through Atlanta minister Charles Stanley’s InTouch Ministries.¹¹⁵ In this talk, Barton suggests that secular historians and intellectuals are hiding the history of America’s biblical founding from today’s students, and misrepresenting the founders as atheists and deists. To counter these alleged fallacies, he highlights the religious faith of several founding figures who were outspokenly Christian, including John Adams, Benjamin Rush, and Roger Sherman, all while glossing over founding figures like Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, whose religious faith did not align with evangelical Christianity.¹¹⁶ Barton then quickly moves to the claim that America is a Christian nation, as if it were obvious that the founders must have intended to create an essentially Christian nation—a quite dubious assumption.¹¹⁷ Barton goes on to argue that only a Christian nation can offer freedom of religion and free markets, and that government cannot be separated from religion and morality. Barton’s talk is quite a performance, but it does little justice to the complexities of the founding period itself, let alone those associated with church-state separation in the U.S.

In his 1992 *The Myth of Separation*, Barton marshals an arsenal of quotes, writings, and court opinions in support of his case that the founders (which he construes very expansively) intended the U.S. to be a Christian nation and that their intent was largely followed by the courts for most of the country’s history, but that the courts have departed from the founders’ intent since 1947. He calls the doctrine of separation of church and state “absurd.”¹¹⁸ “There is no ‘wall of separation’ in the Constitution,” Barton claims, “unless it is a wall intended by the Founding Fathers to keep the government out of the church.”¹¹⁹ He blames the courts, especially the United States Supreme Court, for what he considers as the nation’s departure from Christian Americanism: “The courts have restructured the traditions and habits that had formed part of American life since our nation’s founding by their use of the First Amendment.”¹²⁰ “Collectively,” he writes, “this nation’s leaders have allowed the Supreme Court to reject the standards delivered to us by our Founders and to take stands which God cannot bless but must rather oppose. We must again learn to view governmental actions from God’s viewpoint. . . . Our national policy must not be one of the denial of God, nor of apathy toward Him. It should, as formerly, ‘press on to acknowledge God.’”¹²¹ In addition to the judiciary, Barton blames Americans’ ignorance about the founding period for contemporary claims that America is not a Christian nation.¹²² In a July 2018 interview on the WallBuilders Live radio program, Barton asserted that “when you start reading original writings and documents from the founding fathers, from the founding era[, it] becomes very obvious that Christianity shaped and molded America. . . .

There is no dispute that we were founded as a nation [that] was using the Bible as a guidebook for much and most of what we did.”¹²³

More recently, Barton has become an outspoken proponent of so-called “religious liberty” protections for those who wish to discriminate against LGBTQ persons on the grounds of religious belief. On his Wallbuilders website, he writes:

As currently demonstrated in countless nations around the world, and now in America, when secularism or any other non-Biblical philosophy becomes dominant in its culture, a loss of legal protections for religious rights is usually one of the first casualties of the change. . . . Today in America, to seek to provide protection for the traditional rights of religious conscience is now regularly denounced as discriminatory.¹²⁴

Glenn Beck

Bestselling author and radio and television personality Glenn Beck is likely the best known of the Texas-based figures discussed here. Beck, a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS; Mormonism), describes himself as “a born again LDS Christian.”¹²⁵ Though not as explicitly Christian Americanist as Barton, he has occasionally made use of Christian Americanist talking points and perhaps more importantly, has provided media and educational platforms for spreading the ideology.

There is scattered evidence of Beck’s own Christian Americanist sentiments throughout his career. In his 2009 book *Arguing with Idiots*, Beck tells his readers to point out to their “idiot friends” that the words “separation of church and state” are not found in the First Amendment.¹²⁶ Beck goes on to assert, like Barton, that the “clear meaning” of Jefferson’s “wall of separation” metaphor was “that *religions were protected from the state*, not the other way around.”¹²⁷ Also in 2009, Beck took issue with President Barack Obama’s comment in a speech in Turkey that Americans “do not consider ourselves a Christian nation or a Jewish nation or a Muslim nation” but instead “a nation of citizens.”¹²⁸ Citing John Adams, Beck countered that “the general principles on which the [Founding] Fathers achieved independence were the general principles of Christianity.”¹²⁹ He further appealed to another founder, as well as David Barton: “James Madison, author of the Constitution, said, ‘religion is the basis and foundation of government.’ Author and world-renowned historian David Barton concurs.”¹³⁰ Beck went on to claim that Obama’s comments “stunned many Americans who knew that America, in fact, was founded on Christian-Judeo [sic] principles.”¹³¹ In a 2016 radio broadcast, Beck claimed that the founders based the Constitution on the Bible:

You don’t necessarily have to use the Bible as your compass because the founders used the Bible as the compass to enact the laws of the Constitution. The laws, the amendments are all based on natural law and God’s law. So, our politicians, all they need to do is use the Constitution as their compass and they’ll be in line with nature’s God and nature’s laws.¹³²

Beck's "TheBlaze" television and radio programs give him a platform to discuss a variety of issues, including Christian Americanism, from a conservative perspective.¹³³ Over the years, he has devoted several episodes to extended conversations with David Barton. In one 2012 episode, Barton promoted his *Founders' Bible*, which serves to underpin his claim that the founders built the U.S. on biblical principles.¹³⁴ In a 2013 episode, Beck and Barton, discussing the Second Amendment, argued (among other things) that gun rights are granted by God.¹³⁵

Furthermore, Beck and Barton have collaborated on a number of Christian Americanist-oriented education opportunities in recent years. In 2010, Beck started his online "Beck University," which purported to "brin[g] together experts in the fields of religion, American history and economics," who would "explore the concepts of Faith, Hope, and Charity and show . . . how they influence America's past, her present and most importantly her future."¹³⁶ One of these "experts" was David Barton.¹³⁷

In 2017, Beck, Barton, and Barton's son Tim launched what Beck called a "historic apprentice program" for young people aged 18 to 25. Beck said that the summer 2017 program would allow young persons to work alongside the Bartons and himself to examine thousands of "original documents" and learn how to answer a number of questions, such as: "Is America a Christian nation? Were we founded on Judeo-Christian principles? Were the Founders Christians themselves?"¹³⁸ In addition, this program would allow apprentices "to come in and learn everything and have hands-on experience with these unbelievable . . . first copies of the documents," as well as helping to "propagate this all throughout the world."¹³⁹ Tim Barton explained that the program will help young people "defuse" the "confusion" taught at universities about these questions.¹⁴⁰

Beck's nonprofit Mercury One also offered a "leadership training program" for 18-to-25-year-olds in summer 2019. Topics included "America's Godly Heritage" and "God and the Constitution."¹⁴¹ Also in summer 2019, Mercury One offered a "Teachers Conference" featuring David and Tim Barton; among the topics were "Christian Heritage (from the First Colonists to American Independence and the Founding Era to the Civil War and Beyond)" and "Apologetics for Modern Attacks on America and American History."¹⁴²

Whereas Beck has frequently demonstrated a considerable degree of affiliation with Christian Americanism, the precise degree is unclear. In his 2009 book, *Glenn Beck's Common Sense*, he writes, "Let's stop using our religious symbols to score political points. Are we that insecure in our own faith that the religious symbols or public prayers of a different religion cannot be welcomed with open arms? . . . Religions and their followers must stop turning on each other."¹⁴³ It is unclear how Beck would reconcile such inclusive sentiments with the intimations of Christian Americanism in his other statements and activities.

David Lane

California-based David Lane once worked as a grassroots organizer for Houston-area activist Steve Hotze (profiled below).¹⁴⁴ Since the mid-1990s Lane has been active in efforts, both in Texas and nationally, to draw pastors into right-wing politics.¹⁴⁵ He currently serves as head of the American Renewal Project (ARP). Funded in part by donations from Texas billionaire Dan Wilks (profiled below),¹⁴⁶ ARP's mission is "to minister to people of faith in their transition from spectators to participants in the cultural arena, with emphasis being placed on religion and morality, the cornerstones of freedom."¹⁴⁷ The ARP website claims that America's founders "understood that freedom requires virtue and virtue requires Christianity," asserts "America's Biblical founding," and advocates "return[ing] America to the Christian-based model established by the Founders."¹⁴⁸ On the organization's mission page, Lane complains that "the Bible has been removed from public education," rendering the general public ignorant about America's Biblical founding."¹⁴⁹

Lane claims that "it's easily defended that America was founded by Christians, as a Christian nation," though he bases this not on the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, but reaches back to the Mayflower Compact and the legal compact for the founding of Jamestown.¹⁵⁰ Elsewhere, Lane argues "that while 'America was a Christian nation' since its founding, now it must choose between being 'a Christian nation or a pagan nation.'"¹⁵¹ He has said that "our long-term strategy must be to place the Bible in Public Schools as the principle [sic] textbook of American education."¹⁵² As Peter Montgomery writes in the left-leaning "Right Wing Watch," Lane "preaches that the U.S. has a divine mission to glorify God and advance the Christian faith, and he has called the separation of church and state a 'lie' and a 'fabricated whopper' designed to stop 'Christian America—the moral majority—from imposing moral government on pagan public schools, pagan higher learning and pagan media."¹⁵³

While Lane's statements promote a radical form of Christian Americanism, his significance lies primarily in his work as a self-described "political operative."¹⁵⁴ Since the 1990s, Lane has orchestrated "Pastors and Pews" events across the nation designed to encourage pastors to preach about politics and engage with right-wing politicians.¹⁵⁵ Lane's "Rediscover God in America" events connect pastors with Christian Americanists like David Barton and Mike Huckabee.¹⁵⁶ In 2008, Lane said, "What we're doing is the mobilization of pastors and pews to restore America to her Judeo-Christian heritage. That's our goal."¹⁵⁷ He told the *New York Times* that the "end result" of Pastors and Pews is "political": "From my perspective, our country is going to hell because pastors won't lead from the pulpits."¹⁵⁸

Though Lane is based in California, he has been quite active in Texas. He organized The Texas Restoration Project (later renamed the Texas Renewal Project), which has links to ARP¹⁵⁹ and seeks "to mobilize socially conservative pastors in support of Republican candidates for public office."¹⁶⁰ According to the left-leaning Texas Freedom Network (TFN), the Texas Renewal Project supports pastors and their spouses "who come to listen to select politicians and religious-right leaders demand that Christians assert control over American government."¹⁶¹ Speakers at TRP events have included politicians such as U.S.

Senator Ted Cruz and Texas Governors Rick Perry and Greg Abbott, as well as religious right activists like Rafael Cruz and David Barton.¹⁶²

Steven F. Hotze and Conservative Republicans of Texas

Steven F. Hotze is a Houston-area doctor who has become particularly influential in state Republican politics, mainly due to the strength of his activism, political endorsements, and campaign contributions. In 1996, journalist Tim Fleck characterized him as “a Houston allergist who in his spare time is a self-proclaimed champion of biblical values as a basis for civil government,” and who “has carved out a niche in local [Houston] politics over the past decade as an unyielding and occasionally strident opponent of abortion and public acceptance of homosexuality.”¹⁶³ In 2017, journalist Scott Braddock described Hotze as a “stridently anti-gay archconservative” who “holds significant sway with a large portion of Republican primary voters in Harris County, home to roughly one-fifth of the state’s electorate.”¹⁶⁴ Hotze shares both political and business ties with Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick (discussed below).¹⁶⁵

Hotze leads the Conservative Republicans of Texas (CRT) political action committee.¹⁶⁶ The CRT, which aims to “advance Constitutional liberties based upon Biblical principles,”¹⁶⁷ has been listed by the Southern Poverty Law Center as a hate group.¹⁶⁸

Both conservative columnist Robert D. Novak and Houston reporter Tim Fleck identify Hotze as a Christian Reconstructionist.¹⁶⁹ Fleck describes Hotze as “a national leader in the Christian Reconstruction movement, whose more extreme elements advocate replacing democratic government with rule by a theocratic elite”; however, Fleck notes, “Hotze himself has denied that he favors establishment of a theocracy.”¹⁷⁰ Fleck quotes a 1990 op-ed in the *Houston Chronicle* in which Hotze writes: “If we are to survive as a free nation, and if justice and liberty are to be restored in our land, then biblical Christianity, with its absolutes, must once again be embraced by our citizens. . . . Only then can we expect to see Christianity’s influence once again to be reflected in the laws of our civil government.”¹⁷¹

Hotze’s reported comments in a 1990 video would seem to bear out the characterization as a Christian Reconstructionist:

Biblically, the legitimate role of civil government is to provide justice based upon the absolute standards of God’s law, to restrain wickedness, to punish evil doers, and to protect the life, liberty and property of law abiding citizens.

Christians have the responsibility to be actively involved in family, church and civil government arenas. There is no neutrality. Civil government will either reflect biblical Christianity or it will reflect anti-Christian positions.¹⁷²

More recently, Hotze called for “men of God” to “restore our nation to its Godly, Christian, Biblical heritage”; this apparently entails vigorously opposing abortion and LGBTQ equality.¹⁷³ Addressing a conservative rally two years earlier, Hotze unsheathed a sword (which he said represented God’s word) and called homosexuals “hate-mongers,”

suggesting that “they hate God’s word, they hate Christ, they hate anything that’s good and wholesome and right. They want to pervert everything.”¹⁷⁴

Hotze has been similarly unsparing in his attacks on more moderate Republicans, especially former Texas House Speaker Joe Straus. He accused Straus and his legislative lieutenants of “being in sync with the ‘homosexual political movement,’” and at one point suggested Straus, who is Jewish, “was working to outlaw Christianity.”¹⁷⁵ In the 2016 primaries, Hotze’s CRT PAC spent around \$1 million in support of those challenging House Republican leadership and other incumbents.¹⁷⁶

Gary North

Economist Gary North is founder of the Texas-based Dominion Press and the Institute for Christian Economics, important sources for Christian Reconstructionist literature.¹⁷⁷ The son-in-law of R. J. Rushdoony and a one-time aide to former Congressman Ron Paul of Texas, North has been described as an influential far-right figure, especially in the Christian home-school movement.¹⁷⁸ His *Biblical BluePrint Series* “explores the application of Reconstructionist theology to every area of life (including government, education, and family, but also the welfare, banking, and taxation systems).”¹⁷⁹ North contends that “the Bible provides the moral foundation of free market voluntarism.”¹⁸⁰ He also holds “that the Bible forbids any welfare programs, is opposed to all inflation, and requires a gold-coin standard for money.”¹⁸¹

North’s take on the nation’s putatively Christian character differs from that of most other figures mentioned here. Whereas most of his Christian Americanist colleagues claim to find Christianity in or behind the Constitution, North argues that despite the fact that the U.S. has been “Christian from the beginning,” it “has had a humanist Constitution since 1788.”¹⁸² He contends that “the Constitution is not Christian,” and thus “the nation is **confessionally schizophrenic**.”¹⁸³ In his self-published book *Conspiracy in Philadelphia: Origins of the United States Constitution* (2013), North contends that the ratification of the Constitution resulted in “the transformation of a dozen independent Christian civil commonwealths in 1775 into the covenantally agnostic civil order of 1788 that would, over the next two centuries, become covenantally atheistic.”¹⁸⁴ This departs sharply from the view of Barton, Beck, and others.

Yet like other Christian Americanists, North does wish to see the U.S. *become* a Christian nation. Indeed, he advocates for a Christian theocracy, a term he is not afraid to deploy. From 1974 to 1981, North edited *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*,¹⁸⁵ “dedicated to the fulfilment of the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28 and 9:1—to subdue the earth to the glory of God.”¹⁸⁶ In a 1982 essay, he suggests using Christian schools to

train up a generation of people who know that there is no religious neutrality, no neutral law, no neutral education, and no neutral civil government. Then they will get busy in constructing a Bible-based social, political, and religious order which finally denies the religious liberty of the enemies of God. Murder, abortion, and pornography will be illegal. God’s law will be enforced.¹⁸⁷

Contending that public schools “are established as a humanist religion aimed at stamping out Christianity,” he advocates closing them down and refunding the money to taxpayers, who would then “seek out their own schools for their children, at their expense.”¹⁸⁸ And he states clearly where this would lead: either “to a *theocracy* in which no public funds can be appropriated for anti-Christian activities, or to *anarchy*, where there are no public funds to appropriate. It must lead to *God’s* civil government or *no* civil government.”¹⁸⁹

Despite his outspoken views (or perhaps because of them), North seems to have been largely inactive politically; he has restricted his advocacy to writing articles and books (most published by his Dominion Press), and blogging on a wide range of topics. In these capacities, however, he keeps alive the hardline theocratic strand of Christian Americanism advocated by his late father-in-law Rushdoony.

Tim Dunn

There is a long tradition of Texas oil and gas magnates involved in ultraconservative politics, among them oilmen Hugh Roy Cullen and H.L. Hunt.¹⁹⁰ A current representative of that tradition is oil and gas developer Tim Dunn, head of CrownQuest Operations in Midland, Texas.¹⁹¹

Like the Wilks brothers (discussed below), Dunn rarely speaks publicly. However, his few public statements suggest a commitment to Christian Americanism. *Texas Monthly* writer R. G. Ratcliffe reports that during a 2010 meeting with then-House Speaker Joe Straus, “Dunn astonished Straus, who is Jewish, by saying that only Christians should be in leadership positions” in the Texas House.¹⁹² Ratcliffe also notes that Dunn “has stated repeatedly that our democracy must be brought into line with biblical laws.”¹⁹³

Ratcliffe’s description seems to be borne out by Dunn’s statements in a 2016 radio interview and a 2018 sermon. In a 2016 interview on Richardson-based Kerbey Anderson’s radio talk show, Dunn never explicitly claims that America is or should be a Christian nation, yet he does sound some of the key notes of the Christian Americanist tune. He claims that America’s tradition of self-government “came about because of the biblical understanding,” and that self-government is founded in the Ten Commandments and other biblical passages.¹⁹⁴ In a 2018 sermon at his home church in Midland, Dunn repeats and elaborates on these themes and goes on to complain about the Supreme Court’s prohibition of prayer in public schools. The high court, he contends, is establishing “a national religion of materialism. They call it political correctness. Political, meaning humans decide, not God.”¹⁹⁵ America’s founders, he concludes, “chose God as king, over a tyrant. Today the choice is still before us.”¹⁹⁶

Dunn’s influence on Texas politics, however, stems less from his public statements than from his financial contributions to politicians and organizations. He is a vice chairman of, and a donor to, the Texas Public Policy Foundation (TPPF), a conservative research organization whose stated mission is “to promote and defend **liberty, personal responsibility, and free enterprise** in Texas and the nation by educating and affecting policymakers and the Texas public policy debate with academically sound research and

outreach.”¹⁹⁷ Dunn is also founder of Empower Texans (ET), a conservative libertarian nonprofit that “seek[s] policy outcomes that provide increasing levels of economic liberty and opportunity for all Texans by controlling the size of government.”¹⁹⁸ Ratcliffe writes that “Empower Texans produces tip sheets telling legislators how to vote, and then, come election time . . . produces legislator scorecards to sway voter opinion.”¹⁹⁹ However, neither is explicitly Christian Americanist; both nonprofits focus instead on pushing a conservative libertarian approach to government.²⁰⁰

Another Dunn-backed organization, Citizens for Self-Governance (CSG), does have Christian Americanist links. As Ratcliffe reports, “CSG aims to call a convention of the states to revise the Constitution.”²⁰¹ The CSG website, which features audio talks on the biblical basis for American government, also offers a link to Barton’s Wallbuilders website, listed under “Partners & Friends.”²⁰²

Ratcliffe calls Dunn “probably the most influential donor operating in Texas today,” having donated over \$9 million to Texas politicians since 2002. Dunn’s Empower Texans spent nearly \$5 million on the 2014 state elections.²⁰³ Almost \$2 million in loans and contributions went to two candidates, Attorney General Ken Paxton and Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick—the latter a prominent Christian Americanist politician, as described below.

Wilks Brothers

Dan and Farris Wilks, residents of Cisco, Texas, are conservative Christian billionaires who have gained a reputation as “the Koch brothers of the Christian Right.”²⁰⁴ The brothers made their wealth in the natural gas fracking business in the 2000s.²⁰⁵ In 2011, they made the Forbes 400 list of wealthiest Americans, with each brother worth around \$1.4 billion.²⁰⁶

As one reporter put it, “After profiting greatly from the fracking boom, they set about to help fashion the kind of America they want—a country where religion trumps government and conservative values prevail.”²⁰⁷ The brothers typically refrain from explicitly calling for a Christian America, but their few public statements strongly suggest that is their goal. Dan Wilks has publicly advocated “bring[ing] the Bible back into the school,” though he did not elaborate.²⁰⁸ In a 2013 sermon, his brother Farris, then serving as pastor of a fundamentalist church in Cisco, spoke approvingly of David Barton’s claims that the founders based the Constitution on the Bible. He also declared that “we are in a battle for our society”: “Who is in charge? Is it man, or is it our creator?”²⁰⁹ In a 2014 sermon, Farris Wilks claimed that “the cornerstones of our government are crumbling, and starting to come apart. And it’s because of the lack of morality . . . the lack of belief in our heavenly father.”²¹⁰ In another 2014 sermon, Farris Wilks predicted that the Christian community will soon be persecuted by the government. “It’s time that we stand up,” he said.²¹¹

As with Dunn, however, the evidence for the Wilks brothers' Christian Americanism comes less from their public statements and more from their financial contributions to, and association with, Christian Americanist groups and politicians. The Thirteen Foundation, founded by Farris and his wife, "has become a major funder to Religious Right organizations and to right-wing political outfits that are part of the Koch brothers' network."²¹² According to public nonprofit filings, the Thirteen Foundation gave David Barton's WallBuilders organization \$85,000 in 2011 and \$3,135,000 in 2015.²¹³ It also made sizeable donations to the anti-gay Family Research Council (FRC), which purports to "promot[e] the Judeo-Christian worldview as the basis for a just, free, and stable society,"²¹⁴ and which holds an annual Values Voter Summit where Christian conservatives hear from GOP presidential hopefuls.²¹⁵ The *Texas Observer* reports that in 2018, the Wilks brothers donated \$1.25 million to Tim Dunn's Empower Texans, making them the second largest funders of the advocacy group, just after Dunn himself.²¹⁶

Dan Wilks' Heavenly Father's Foundation (HFF) has helped to fund Christian Americanist David Lane's American Renewal Project and Pastors and Pews effort (discussed above), via contributions to the American Family Association, to which Farris Wilks' Thirteen Foundation has also contributed.²¹⁷ Reportedly Dan Wilks also funds a church for a Christian nationalist pastor in California.²¹⁸

Furthermore, the Wilks brothers have contributed directly to conservative and Christian Americanist politicians—so much so that they have been described as "among Texas' top GOP kingmakers."²¹⁹ The brothers made substantial donations to both Rick Perry's and Greg Abbott's gubernatorial campaigns.²²⁰ Furthermore, Wilks money reportedly funded the "Keep the Promise" super PAC headed by David Barton that supported Ted Cruz's 2016 presidential bid.²²¹

The examples of the Wilks brothers and Tim Dunn demonstrate that financial contributions constitute an important form of political "speech" in the spread of Christian Americanist ideology.

Rafael Cruz

Itinerant preacher and evangelist Rafael Cruz, father of Texas Senator Ted Cruz (described below), is based in Carrollton, a Dallas suburb.²²² Rafael Cruz espouses a form of Seven Mountains Dominionism, which (as noted in Section 1) holds that Christians must take control of seven areas of life: family, religion, education, media, entertainment, business, and government.²²³ According to a biographical note on a speaker booking website, Cruz emigrated from Cuba in the early 1960s and serves as a Dallas pastor, professor of Bible and theology, director of Purifying Fire Ministries, and president of Kingdom Translation Services.²²⁴ He is perhaps most widely known, however, for his service as a campaign surrogate during his son's unsuccessful 2016 presidential run.

As liberal commentator David Corn writes, Cruz “has given scores, probably hundreds, of sermons and talks at religious and political gatherings, and many are on YouTube. His primary theme is that the United States is a ‘Christian nation’ and that only true believers who adhere to biblical principles—that is, who accept the literal truth of the Bible, as Rafael Cruz and other fundamentalists see it—are worthy of guiding the United States forward.”²²⁵ Corn reports that in a 2013 Tea Party gathering in Hood County, Texas, Cruz declared that the United States is a “Christian nation,” insisted “that the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution ‘were signed on the knees of the framers’ and were a ‘divine revelation from God,’” and claimed that “the United States of America was formed to honor the word of God.”²²⁶ In another 2013 sermon, Corn reports that Cruz “proclaimed that Satan ‘rules in the halls of legislation,’ and said, ‘We have a responsibility to preserve the biblical foundations of this country.’”²²⁷

When Cruz addressed the May 2016 Texas GOP Convention in Dallas, he “claimed that God inspired the Founders to produce the Constitution, and declared that ‘biblical values’ have made America the greatest country on earth. He encouraged Christian pastors to run for public office at every level, and called upon all Christians to exercise their ‘sacred responsibility’ to vote for candidates who uphold biblical values.”²²⁸ In a sermon the same year, Cruz claimed that separation of church and state was intended by the founders “to be a ‘one-way wall’—preventing government from interfering in religion but allowing the Church to exercise dominion over government.”²²⁹

Robert Jeffress

An outspoken supporter of President Trump and a Fox News contributor, Robert Jeffress is, after Glenn Beck, perhaps the best-known Christian Americanist discussed here. Since 2007, he has served as senior pastor at the 13,000-member First Baptist Dallas church. Besides authoring 25 books, he hosts the daily radio program “Pathway to Victory.” He also serves as an adjunct professor at the Dallas Theological Seminary.²³⁰

Jeffress and First Baptist Dallas sparked controversy in 2018 by advertising the pastor’s June 24, 2018, sermon on a Dallas billboard that proclaimed “America is a Christian Nation.”²³¹ After widespread criticism, including that of Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings, the company that owns the billboard removed the sign.²³² The controversy did not, however, deter Jeffress from giving his sermon. As reported by *Vox*, Jeffress told the congregation that “The founding fathers . . . were predominately Christians who wanted to found a Christian country and believed that ‘our future success depends on our country being faithful to those eternal truths of God’s will.’”²³³ As Whitehead and Perry note, Jeffress’ sermon “included no key biblical text—rare for a conservative Protestant expositor like Jeffress,” but instead “leaned almost exclusively on quotes from ‘founding fathers,’ founding documents, and court decisions.”²³⁴ Whitehead and Perry also point out that Jeffress’ sermon included “no calls to be ‘good Samaritans’ to our neighbors,” but instead urged Christians to “stand up and confront the ‘secularists,’ ‘humanists,’ ‘atheists,’ and ‘infidels’ who are taking control of *our* Christian country.”²³⁵

Jeffress has long promoted a very strong Christian Americanism in books such as the 2008 *Outrageous Truth: 7 Absolutes You Can Still Believe*. In a chapter titled “America Is a Christian Nation,” Jeffress uses many of the same arguments deployed by David Barton: the founders were faithful Christians and intended for America to be a Christian nation; court decisions for the first 150 years of the nation’s history were faithful to the founders’ intent; but after 1947, the U.S. Supreme Court radically reinterpreted the religion clauses and constructed a wall of separation between church and state.²³⁶ Like Barton, Jeffress also takes particular aim at religious diversity itself: “Many have fooled themselves into thinking that religious pluralism (the worship of many gods) is the great strength of our nation. . . . But ‘diversity’ and ‘pluralism’ are just euphemisms for what God calls ‘idolatry.’ God doesn’t celebrate religious diversity, ‘You shall have no other gods before Me.’”²³⁷

In his 2016 book *Twilight’s Last Gleaming*, Jeffress echoes Barton’s argument that the religion clauses in the First Amendment were intended by the founders not to establish equal treatment of all religions, but only to prevent the establishment of one *Christian* denomination as the official church.²³⁸

Dave Welch

Dave Welch, a Houston-area minister, is the founder of the U.S. Pastor Council (USPC), Texas Pastor Council, and Houston-Area Pastor Council.²³⁹ As the *Texas Tribune* reports, there is significant overlap between those three groups: “Welch . . . leads all three groups, and the main phone number for the U.S. Pastor Council is a direct line to Welch.”²⁴⁰ Welch is probably most widely known for his vigorous opposition to LGBTQ rights, especially his role in spearheading the successful effort to defeat the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance, which would have given legal protections to LGBTQ persons.²⁴¹

Welch also frequently sounded Christian Americanist themes in his commentary pieces for the conservative web outlet World News Daily (WND) between 2008 and 2010. He opens one piece by asking: “How could this nation, founded on the solid foundation of Judeo-Christian traditions that produced personal freedom, political stability, economic prosperity, and cultural unity, slide so far from those roots?”²⁴² In other pieces, he claims that “the Bible provided guiding principles to our U.S. Constitution,”²⁴³ and declares that “we need to turn our nation and government to God and to the Constitution.”²⁴⁴

Welch’s Christian Americanism is also evident in his links to the USPC. A major component of the organization is the “AMERICA Plan,” which contains several Christian Americanist talking points. The plan claims that the American form of government is divinely ordained and contends that “the intentional misapplication of ‘Separation of Church and State’ has deceived many and must be refuted by truth.”²⁴⁵ It calls for Christians to “understand the legitimate function of government as defined by Scripture and proven by history” and to “promot[e] a Biblical standard of morality and virtue into [sic] the culture and government.”²⁴⁶

Another USPC document, entitled “The Biblical Basis of Government and Civil Involvement,” also sounds Christian Americanist themes and echoes Barton in labeling the “wall of separation” as a myth. The document claims that the “original intent” of the First Amendment “was not an effort to remove religion from public life”; instead, “Our forefathers sought to prevent a state-established church from gaining a monopoly over politics, but they did not want to take God out of politics.”²⁴⁷ Though no author is listed for this document, one can tentatively assume that Welch, as USPC president, authorized its content.

Welch is also associated with the “24-Year Plan,” an effort “To rebuild American civilization upon the Foundation of the Principles of the Bible.”²⁴⁸ It is directed by California-based Jay Grimstead, who also directs the Coalition for Revival, a network of evangelical leaders who seek to “implement the Biblical and Christian Worldview [sic].”²⁴⁹ The 24-Year Plan’s “New Testament goal” is to “brin[g] all of American life in society and state to bow before the feet of King Jesus and allow His principles to guide all areas of life as we had operating in early America.”²⁵⁰ The plan seeks to mobilize activists to

work in a systematic, coordinated way to have mature Christian men (who qualify to be church elders according to I Tim. 3) completely capture a majority of seats in the U. S. Congress and in a majority of at least 40 state legislatures within a stated number of years! Until we actually capture a majority of seats in the U. S. Congress and in most state legislatures, all we are doing is pleading with godless, unprincipled elected officials to please pass some good laws that we Christians can tolerate and all the while being completely at their mercy.²⁵¹

Welch is listed as one of the 24 national elders who will lead the Plan, and his efforts with the Houston Area Pastor Council are mentioned as a model of the intended approach.²⁵²

John Hagee

Hagee is founder and senior pastor of Cornerstone Church, a San Antonio megachurch that claims 22,000 members,²⁵³ and his programs are carried on the Daystar and Trinity Broadcasting networks. A Christian Zionist, he is the founder of Christians United for Israel, which seeks to “transfor[m] millions of pro-Israel Christians into an educated, empowered, and effective force for Israel.”²⁵⁴

Hagee has also occasionally expressed Christian Americanist sentiments. In 2016, he tweeted that “we were born a Christian nation. We are still a Christian nation.”²⁵⁵ According to a *Huffington Post* report, Hagee told his audience in a 2012 televised sermon at Cornerstone that “this country was not built for atheists nor by atheists” but “by Christian people who believed in the word of God.” He further addressed any atheists who might have been watching: “If our belief in God offends you, move.”²⁵⁶ In a 2015 Cornerstone Church sermon entitled “Can America Survive Until 2017?,” Hagee declared that one reason “America will not long endure” is the ongoing process of purging religion from public schools and the public square.²⁵⁷ Barton has also been a featured speaker at Hagee’s church.²⁵⁸

Christian Americanist Lawmakers

While nongovernmental Christian Americanist leaders are comparatively easy to identify by their statements and actions, the task of identifying Christian Americanist lawmakers presents special challenges. Many Texas politicians, regardless of party, attest to their Christian faith; indeed, such professions seem almost *de rigueur*, especially among Texas Republicans. However, lawmakers can be Christians and voice their own Christian identity without being Christian Americanists. For instance, Sylvia Garcia, formerly a Democratic state senator and now a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, told me that while her Roman Catholic faith shapes her life and her politics, she rejects the notion that the U.S. is a Christian nation: “We should be a nation of the people, by the people and for the people. That means all people, not just ones who share our exact beliefs.”²⁵⁹ For the purposes of this study, to count as a Christian Americanist, a lawmaker must do more than merely declare affiliation with Christianity. They must make statements and/or advocate policies that indicate or at least suggest agreement with all or a substantial part of Christian Americanism as defined in this section.

This section profiles six of the most prominent and influential officeholders who meet those criteria: U.S. Senator Ted Cruz, U.S. Representative Louie Gohmert, former Governor Rick Perry, Governor Greg Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, and Texas Representative Dan Flynn.

It may be surprising that former Texas Governor and U.S. President George W. Bush does not appear in this list. After all, as historian Steven K. Green writes, “no modern politician drew more allusions to the nation’s religious heritage than did George W. Bush.”²⁶⁰ Indeed, historian Richard T. Hughes writes: “As a fundamentalist Christian, Bush—like his evangelical and fundamentalist base—thoroughly confused the Christian view of reality with the purposes of the United States. After all, from their perspective, the United States really was a Christian nation.”²⁶¹ Since leaving the presidency in 2009, however, Bush has largely retired from political life, especially in the realm of Texas politics; thus he falls outside the timeframe and scope of this study.

U.S. Senator Ted Cruz

Rafael Edward “Ted” Cruz has served as the junior senator from Texas since 2013, and he also made an unsuccessful bid for the GOP presidential nomination in 2016. Cruz has clear ties to the Christian Americanist movement. Besides his association with his father Rafael, he has close links to David Barton, who headed one of the “Keep the Promise” super PACs supporting Cruz’s 2016 presidential bid. Further, another “Keep the Promise” super PAC received millions of dollars in contributions from the Wilks brothers.²⁶² However, Senator Cruz’s espousal of Christian Americanism is less explicit than that of his father or Barton. Historian John Fea writes that Cruz, being “a good politician . . . knows the theological affirmations of his father [or] Barton . . . might be too much for some Americans to swallow. He does not use the terms ‘dominionism’ or ‘seven mountains’ when he is campaigning. But it is also worth noting that he has never publicly rejected these beliefs.”²⁶³ Indeed, Fea detects a kind of Christian Americanist code in Cruz’s political rhetoric: “When Cruz says he wants to ‘reclaim’ or ‘restore’ America, he . . . wants to ‘restore’ the United

States to what he believes is its original identity: a Christian nation.”²⁶⁴ Fea argues that Barton’s support is key here: “Barton’s work is an important part of Cruz’s larger theological and political campaign to take back America . . . If Barton can prove that the United States was once a Christian republic, then Cruz will have the historical argument he needs to sustain his narrative of American decline.”²⁶⁵

Cruz himself has made use of Christian Americanist rhetoric on several occasions. In the epilogue to his father’s 2015 book *A Time for Action*, the senator writes: “If our nation’s leaders are elected by unbelievers, is it any wonder that they do not reflect our values? . . . If the body of Christ arises, if Christians simply show up and vote biblical values, we can restore our nation.”²⁶⁶ After winning the Iowa primary during his 2016 presidential bid, Cruz told a crowd that his win was “a victory for ‘Judeo-Christian values’” on which the country was “built.”²⁶⁷ In South Carolina in 2016, he declared: “Our nation was founded on Judeo-Christian values. . . . [The] values of life and marriage are under assault, religious liberty is under assault, and yet the American people are rising up.”²⁶⁸ And in his speech announcing his withdrawal from the 2016 presidential race, Cruz said, “I am not suspending our fight to defend the constitution, to defend the Judeo-Christian values that built America.”²⁶⁹

Members of his campaign were more forthright in tying the candidate to Christian Americanist tenets. As the *Christian Post* reported, Rafael Cruz said that his son’s campaign was “intertwined” with the effort to call the nation back to “Judeo-Christian principles.”²⁷⁰

U.S. Representative Louie Gohmert

Louis Buller “Louie” Gohmert Jr. has served as U.S. Representative for Texas’ First District since 2005.²⁷¹ He has developed a reputation for making controversial statements, such as comparing homosexuality to bestiality and Obama’s presidency to the Nazi regime.²⁷²

He has been equally outspoken in promoting Christian Americanism. “This country is founded on Christian principles by our founding fathers,” he told a Kilgore group in 2009.²⁷³ In a 2012 radio interview with the Heritage Foundation’s Ernest Istook, Gohmert appeared to blame the previous night’s shooting in an Aurora, Colorado movie theatre on repeated attacks on Christianity. Furthermore, in a 2015 speech on the floor of the U.S. House, Gohmert complained that “groups are attacking our Judeo-Christian heritage, trying to rewrite our history, trying to prevent any mention of our Christian heritage,” and said that the Supreme Court has “relegated Moses to the ash heap of history.”²⁷⁴ In a 2016 address at a Longview church, Gohmert declared that “the way for Christians to fight against the secularization of America is to start praying,” and that “(President Barack) Obama said we weren’t a Christian nation. Well, he’s right. . . .We were.”²⁷⁵

Former Texas Governor Rick Perry

Former U.S. Secretary of Energy Rick Perry served as Texas governor from 2000 to 2015, when he was succeeded by Greg Abbott (discussed below). Perry also mounted campaigns for the presidency in 2011-12 and 2015. While not as outspokenly and definitively Christian Americanist as Cruz or Gohmert, several of Perry's public statements suggest some degree of commitment to the ideology. In a 2011 speech at Liberty University, Perry asked, "America is going to be guided by some set of values. The question is going to be, whose values?" and further proclaimed that it should be "those Christian values this country was based upon."²⁷⁶ In a presidential campaign ad that same year, Perry said: "I'm not ashamed to admit that I'm a Christian, but you don't need to be in the pew every Sunday to know there's something wrong in this country when gays can serve openly in the military but our kids can't openly celebrate Christmas or pray in school."²⁷⁷ In 2015, he continued to espouse Christian Americanism: "I do believe that the Judeo-Christian values that this country was based upon are very much important not only to the history of this country, but the future of this country."²⁷⁸

Several observers have also highlighted Perry's links to the dominionist movement, particularly a branch of Seven Mountains Dominionism called the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR).²⁷⁹ As Forrest Wilder reported in 2011, Perry gave "self-proclaimed prophets and apostles" of the NAR leading roles in organizing The Response, a prayer rally held in Houston that year. NAR-affiliated pastor Tom Schlueter of Arlington, Texas, told Wilder that the rally was divinely inspired and that the American government "was basically founded on biblical principles."²⁸⁰ Yet while Perry's links to NAR figures are evident, it remains unclear how far he himself subscribes to NAR thought.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott

Greg Abbott served as Texas attorney general from 2002 until 2015, when he ascended to the governorship. The extent of his adherence to Christian Americanism is more difficult to measure than is the case with his more outspokenly Christian Americanist lieutenant governor, Dan Patrick (profiled below). Though Abbott occasionally deploys Christian Americanist talking points, he tends to be less forthright than Cruz, Gohmert, or Patrick in advocating for a Christian nation.

During his 2014 run for the governorship, he told a religious audience: "I believe that we've seen challenges to the recognition of God in our country as much in the past decade as we've seen in the preceding 100 years. . . . I think God's influence on our country is threatened like we have never seen before."²⁸¹ Two years later at a church visit, Abbott described "how Christians are under secular attacks," and declared that "now, more than ever, we need representatives who base their decisions on moral clarity rather than political correctness. . . . As long as we build our house on the fortress of God, America will never be shaken."²⁸² On his campaign website, Abbott further touts his record as Texas attorney general in defending "the constitutionality of the Ten Commandments on the Texas Capitol grounds all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court."²⁸³ He also defended religious references in the Pledge of Allegiance the presidential inauguration ceremony.²⁸⁴ While these comments and stances certainly intersect with Christian Americanist rhetoric,

they fall short of an explicit call for a Christian nation and could be read as mere expressions of American civil religion.

In a 2015 interview at a “Pastors and Pews” event in Austin, however, Abbott claimed that “the values that Christ teaches” were “the values and principles on which this nation [was] founded,” and that America has begun to decline because we have departed from those values.²⁸⁵ In the following year, the governor ousted a church-state separation group’s holiday display in the state Capitol on the grounds that it “mock[ed] our nation’s Judeo-Christian heritage.”²⁸⁶ Such statements suggest at least some allegiance to Christian Americanism.

Interestingly, despite his call for “representatives who base their decisions on moral clarity rather than political correctness,” Governor Abbott has taken positions that differ from those of his denomination, the Roman Catholic Church. A prime example is his attempt to block Syrian refugees from resettling in Texas, a position opposed by the Texas Conference of Catholic Bishops.²⁸⁷

Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick

Dan Patrick has served as Texas lieutenant governor since 2015. He previously worked as a conservative talk show host in Houston in the 1990s, and then a state senator from 2006 to 2015.²⁸⁸ Patrick is a far more outspoken advocate of Christian Americanism than Governor Abbott. In a 2012 sermon, he called the idea that the U.S. was not founded on the Bible a “myth” spread by the “secular media”; he insisted that the founders built the American government “around the Word of God.”²⁸⁹ He noted that “when we let those who try to shout us down and take away our rights tell us we are not a Christian nation, we must stand [and] we must fight.”²⁹⁰ In a 2014 campaign appearance, he declared that America is a Christian nation that politics is about “building the kingdom” for God, and that government policy should be “biblically based,” though he also said (somewhat paradoxically) that he did not want a theocracy.²⁹¹ After becoming lieutenant governor, he reiterated his claim that the United States was founded on the Bible.²⁹²

Patrick has also appeared willing to enact his religious and Christian nationalist beliefs in law and public policy. When asked for his top accomplishments as a state senator, Patrick noted three achievements: a 2011 measure that required women seeking an abortion first to undergo a sonogram, as well as bills that added the words “In God We Trust” above the Senate dais and the words “Under God” to the state pledge of allegiance.²⁹³ As a state senator, he invoked Christian Americanism in his passionate defense of House Bill 2, which would have forced the closure of most Texas abortion clinics.²⁹⁴

I don’t apologize for being pro-life and I don’t apologize for being a Christian, and I listen to the word of God on this issue. The Bible tells us we are born in the image of God, and I believe when a baby’s life is destroyed we are destroying the image of God. . . . If you believe God, how would God vote tonight if he were here? . . . Are we a nation that stands for a Judeo-Christian ethic, or are we not? . . . So I’m proud to stand and vote for this bill.²⁹⁵

Patrick was also a proponent of religious liberty legislation. In 2009 and 2011, he pushed for a constitutional amendment that would prevent government from substantially burdening persons or religious organizations acting on “sincerely held religious belief.”²⁹⁶ Neither measure made it out of committee.

As mentioned earlier, Patrick also has close ties with Steve Hotze, who presented the lieutenant governor with the “Warrior for Biblical Values” award at a Conservative Republicans of Texas event in 2016.²⁹⁷

State Representative Dan Flynn

While members of the Texas House have relatively little power individually, state Representative Dan Flynn (R-Canton), who has served in the House since 2003, is noteworthy for his persistent attempts to push legislation drawing on Christian Americanist principles.

In the 2011, 2013, 2015, and 2019 legislative sessions, Flynn filed a bill that would effectively allow teachers to prominently post the Ten Commandments in classrooms.²⁹⁸ “This is necessary to protect teachers who have the desire to establish that the country’s historical background is based on Judeo-Christian traditions,” Flynn explained in 2011.²⁹⁹ In 2013, Flynn justified the bill in similarly Christian Americanist terms:

Our country was founded on Judeo Christian principles. The Ten Commandments, one of the supreme doctrines of the Christian faith, naturally provided a type of moral compass for the men who created and founded the rule of law and government for America. From an historical standpoint, a proper understanding of the historical importance of these commandments is essential to the necessary education of our children.³⁰⁰

And in 2019, Flynn once again explained the need for his bill in Christian Americanist terms: “The 10 Commandments were one of the many Judeo-Christian founded documents used to help guide our Founding Fathers.”³⁰¹ Flynn’s measure has so far failed to become law. It remains to be seen whether it will have more success in future.³⁰²

Another of Flynn’s measures, which he has also defended on Christian Americanist grounds, has had greater success. After several failed tries, his “American Laws for American Courts” bill—legislation that would prohibit foreign law, especially Muslim sharia law, from being applied in U.S. courts—was finally enacted in Texas as HB 45 in 2017.³⁰³ Testifying before a House committee in 2015, Flynn explained that “many of his constituents believe American liberties are ‘under attack’ by nefarious foreign influences, and need to be assured that American law will continue to be enforced ‘on American soil.’”³⁰⁴ He justified his bill in a 2014 email warning supporters of the dangers of “religious Islamic law” and claiming that “the Judeo Christian heritage we covet and aim to protect is under attack.”³⁰⁵

Other Legislators

Several other state legislators may well belong in this list of Christian Americanism in Texas. As I will discuss in Section 3, legislation that arguably privileges Christians and/or overlaps with the Christian Americanist agenda has been authored by state Representatives Dustin Burrows (R-Lubbock), Matt Krause (R-Fort Worth), Phil Stephenson (R-Rosenberg), and Bill Zedler (R-Arlington), along with state Senators Charles Perry (R-Lubbock), Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury), and Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola). Whether these and other conservative officeholders are full Christian Americanists or simply proponents of Christian right policies would be a fruitful question for future research.

Summary

Using Chancey's definition of Christian Americanism, this section has constructed a preliminary "dramatis personae" of Christian Americanism in Texas since 2008, consisting of 12 nongovernment activists and six prominent and influential lawmakers. Profiles of each figure indicated the degree to which each appears to embrace the ideology and the type of influence each exerts. The resulting picture demonstrates just how pervasive Christian Americanism is in Texas politics, including the highest levels of state government. This section also indicates the variety of ways in which Christian Americanists express adherence to the ideology—not only through public statements, sermons, and writings, but also through financial donations, mass media, and events bringing together pastors and politicians.

The next section examines the different avenues through which Christian Americanist activists and officeholders in Texas promote the ideology.

Section 3: Means for Promoting Christian Americanism in Texas

As we have seen, Christian Americanism involves more than historical arguments about the original intentions of the founders, and more than mere claims about the past. Christian Americanists seek to reshape the present, to “return” Christianity (or at least their conservative brand of it) to dominance over law and public policy. To do so, Christian Americanists need to spread their ideology, change hearts and minds, and gain followers.

How, then, do the Texas Christian Americanist leaders profiled in Section 2 promulgate the ideology and attract followers? As we will see in this section, they employ a wide variety of means, including nonprofit organizations, books and other publications, mass media outlets, social media, churches, other religio-political gatherings, and—perhaps most importantly—legislation.

This section offers a preliminary survey of how Christian Americanists use these means in Texas. Though by no means exhaustive, this section maps potential sources of information about Christian Americanism in Texas and reveals just how active Christian Americanists are in promoting their cause. It also yields a somewhat surprising finding: despite their rhetoric asserting Christianity’s right to dominate law and public policy, Christian Americanist lawmakers in Texas have filed relatively few pieces of legislation *explicitly* privileging Christianity, though they have offered many other measures that further their goal of breaching the wall of separation between church and state.

Nonprofits and PACs

Several of the figures profiled in Section 2 use 501(c)(3) nonprofits,³⁰⁶ political action committees (PACs),³⁰⁷ and super PACs³⁰⁸ to promote Christian Americanist ideas and activities.

A few Christian Americanist nonprofits were described in Section 2. In particular, David Barton’s WallBuilders develops and offers a variety of materials “to educate the public concerning the periods in our country’s history when its laws and policies were firmly rooted in Biblical principles.”³⁰⁹ Besides publicizing Barton’s own books, the organization’s website offers articles and documents that promote Christian Americanism, and provides access to episodes of the “WallBuilders Live!” radio program and podcast (discussed below). Two other Christian Americanist-oriented nonprofits, Farris Wilks’ Thirteen Foundation and his brother Dan’s Heavenly Father’s Foundation, have made substantial donations to Wallbuilders and to David Lane’s American Renewal Project.

Campaign donations, often channeled through PACs and super PACs, constitute another way for Christian Americanists to propagate the ideology, and they also serve as an important form of Christian Americanist “speech.” The Wilks brothers funded the “Keep the Promise” super PAC, headed by David Barton, in support of Ted Cruz’s 2016 presidential bid. Steve Hotze’s Conservative Republicans of Texas PAC (CRT PAC) and the associated Conservative Republicans of Harris Country also donate to Texas political

candidates and fund political email efforts, phone banks, polling, and get-out-the-vote efforts. In the 2012 election cycle, the CRT PAC not only donated over \$47,000 for Republican political promotions in Texas, but also gave \$50,000 to Donna Campbell's successful campaign to unseat incumbent state Senator Jeff Wentworth (R-Houston); Campbell went on to win the senate seat in the general election.³¹⁰ During the 2016 GOP primaries, the CRT PAC spent around \$1 million opposing Texas House members Hotze believed were blocking anti-transgender legislation.³¹¹ It should be noted, however, that the CRT PAC also donates to politicians who are not associated with Christian Americanism, such as state Representative Dan Huberty, whose campaign received \$5,000 from the PAC in late 2018.³¹²

Publications

Books and online publications offer other venues for Christian Americanists to push their message. Barton, Beck, and Jeffress, all prolific authors, have made especially heavy use of these media.

Many of Barton's books are published by WallBuilders—in other words, self-published. We have already examined *The Myth of Separation* (1992) and *Original Intent* (1997) in previous sections of this report. In Barton's controversial *The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed about Thomas Jefferson* (2012), he claims to find evidence that the nation's third president and author of the "wall of separation" metaphor was in fact utterly pro-Christian throughout his life.³¹³ Additionally, Barton's WallBuilders website contains an extensive library featuring many of Barton's other writings, historical documents offered in support of his Christian Americanist claims, and links to voter guides compiled by conservative Christian organizations such as the Christian Coalition and the Family Research Council.³¹⁴

Glenn Beck has authored several works on the *New York Times* bestseller list. A few of these, such as his 2009 *Arguing with Idiots* (discussed in Section 2), appear to promote Christian Americanism. In *The Original Argument* (2011), Beck writes: "in the beginning, it was God who brought us all together. Restoring His place in the country is the first step toward restoring the union."³¹⁵

Jeffress' *Outrageous Truth* (2008) lays out his Christian nationalist arguments, and his *Twilight's Last Gleaming* (2016) asserts that the founders intended that the U.S. government "show a preference for the Christian faith."³¹⁶

Although books no longer have the power to shape public opinion they once had given the hegemony of social media, the publications of these three authors allow them to lay out their Christian Americanist claims and arguments in far more detail than is possible in social media posts, mass media appearances, or even sermons and speeches. These works thus remain important sources for researchers of Christian Americanism—as well as potent tools for promulgating the ideology.

Mass Media

Barton, Beck, and Jeffress also make extensive use of the mass media—especially radio and television—to spread the Christian Americanist message.

Barton’s WallBuilders features a radio program and podcast, “WallBuilders Live!,” described as “a daily journey into the past to capture the ideas of the Founding Fathers of America and then apply them to the major issues of today.”³¹⁷ Its stated mission is “to Educate people of faith with an understanding of the role of faith in our Nation’s history,” and to “Empower and Equip them to apply a Biblical Worldview to current events and cultural challenges.”³¹⁸ Hosted by Barton, his son Tim, and former Texas state Representative Rick Green, “WallBuilders Live!” gives Barton a platform for his Christian Americanist message and features interviews with conservative politicians and activists, among them Jeffress, Beck, David Lane, and Ted Cruz.³¹⁹ Topics have included “Christian Nation: When Did This Become A Controversy in America?,” “Christian Heritage Yet Ungodly Policies,” “The U.S. Constitution—Refuting the Living Document Argument,” “Immigration Handled The Biblical Way,” and “Presidents Ranked Based On Their Faith In Christ.”³²⁰ According to the WallBuilders website, the program is carried by nearly 300 radio stations.³²¹ Episodes are also available from the WallBuilders website as well as podcast sources such as iTunes and TuneIn.

Christian Americanist talking points also appear on Beck’s “TheBlaze” television and radio programs.³²² For example, in 2017 Beck, objecting to California Senator Dianne Feinstein’s statement to a judicial nominee that “the dogma lives loudly within you,” contended that Christian dogma “lived loudly’ with all of our founders. It lived loudly in Abraham Lincoln,” Beck said, adding that “the increasingly hostile attitude toward faith” constitutes a “danger.”³²³ Furthermore, Beck has often devoted entire episodes to extended conversations with David Barton.

Jeffress is a Fox News contributor. According to his website, he has made “more than 2,000 guest appearances” on radio and television programs, including Fox News Channel’s “Fox and Friends,” “Hannity,” and “Lou Dobbs Tonight.”³²⁴ Jeffress also has his own mass media outlet, the Pathway to Victory (PTV) radio and television ministry, established in 1996. The daily PTV radio program is carried by more than 900 U.S. radio stations, and the television version airs on Christian networks Daystar and Trinity Broadcasting Network.³²⁵ While most PTV episodes deal with pastoral issues, one episode was devoted to Jeffress’ 2017 Dallas sermon proclaiming the U.S. “a Christian Nation.”³²⁶

Social Media

Barton’s WallBuilders also has an active presence on social media. As of February 2020, the WallBuilders Facebook site had nearly 180,000 follows,³²⁷ and its Twitter feed had nearly 32,000 followers.³²⁸ One WallBuilders tweet defends the use of the Bible in public schools³²⁹ and another advertises a Trinity Broadcasting Network program in which Barton and his son Tim claim to reveal the nation’s biblical and religious founding.³³⁰

Beck has an even more impressive social media presence: as of February 2020, his Twitter feed had over 1.2 million followers,³³¹ his Facebook site over 2.7 million followers,³³² and “TheBlaze” Facebook feed over 2 million followers.³³³ Beck uses these social media platforms to offer his conservative take on various issues and to direct followers to episodes of “TheBlaze.” In 2016, he used Facebook to publicize programs on religious liberty and the “foundations of freedom,” featuring conversations with David Barton and programs arguing that the U.S. was founded as a Christian nation.³³⁴

Jeffress is also active on social media, with over 217,000 Facebook followers as of February 2020.³³⁵ He occasionally uses the site to spread Christian Americanist messages. For instance, on February 18, 2019, he posted an image of the Statue of Liberty emblazoned with the quote, “Our country was founded as a Christian Nation”; the post had received over 2,800 “likes” by the following day.³³⁶ On January 8, 2019, he posted: “The Constitution must be upheld, and amended as necessary, on the basis of God’s eternal law.”³³⁷

Social media posts allow Barton, Beck, and Jeffress to spread the Christian Americanist message to thousands of people who might never have read their books or heard their sermons. Christian Americanist use of this media form deserves further investigation.

Churches

As one might expect, churches, particularly conservative evangelical ones, are a prime venue for spreading the Christian Americanist message. I have previously mentioned Jeffress’ 2017 and 2018 First Baptist Dallas sermons proclaiming America as a Christian nation. Barton frequently presents Christian Americanist talks at churches. Take, for example, his 2016 talk at Sojourn Church in Carrollton, Texas. Beginning with a discussion of the protection of religious conscience in U.S. history, Barton gradually builds to a claim that America is a Christian nation whose civil government is built upon Christian principles.³³⁸

Itinerant minister Rafael Cruz has been especially active in promoting the Christian Americanist message at churches around Texas. In October 2018, Cruz spoke at View Baptist Church in Abilene, telling the congregation that “America is the only country on the face of the earth that was founded as a Christian country,” and that “Americans have a responsibility . . . to elect candidates who uphold the principles on which the nation was founded.”³³⁹ That same month, Cruz spoke at Generations Church in Granbury, Texas, where he repeated the claim that America alone “was founded as a Christian nation.”³⁴⁰ He gave a similar sermon the following month at First Baptist Texarkana.³⁴¹

Other Religious and Religio-Political Gatherings

National and regional gatherings are another means by which nongovernmental activists and political figures spread the Christian Americanist message.

The “Pastors and Pews” events, organized by David Lane’s American Renewal Project, have brought pastors together with right-wing politicians around the country since the 1990s.³⁴²

The left-leaning Texas Freedom Network reports that Lane’s Texas Renewal Project (originally The Texas Restoration Project) offers free lodging and meals for pastors and their spouses, enabling them to hear Christian Americanist messages from religious right leaders such as Rick Perry, Greg Abbott, Ted Cruz, Rafael Cruz, and David Barton.³⁴³

As noted in Section 2, Rick Perry worked with members of the dominionist New Apostolic Reformation movement to organize a 2011 Houston gathering, The Response. The event drew an estimated crowd of 30,000.³⁴⁴ The Mississippi-based fundamentalist Christian American Family Association (AFA)—which has been labeled a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center³⁴⁵ and has called for legislation making the Bible mandatory in congressional swearing-in ceremonies³⁴⁶—reportedly donated \$1 million to fund the event.³⁴⁷ Speakers included Perry himself and Pastor John Hagee.³⁴⁸

In 2015, Steve Hotze and his Conservative Republicans of Texas partner Jared Woodfill organized a “Faith Family Freedom Tour” of seven Texas cities, featuring several speakers including David Barton and Hotze himself. Publicity for the tour offered this rationale:

“Enough is Enough!” One need only look around and see that our country is being radically changed by the left. . . . We must stand on our faith and boldly defend our religious liberties, our Constitutional freedoms, and our Judeo Christian [sic] heritage. We have a duty to protect our children and our grandchildren from a political movement that stands for abortion, redefines marriage and removes God from the public arena.³⁴⁹

Gatherings of local Republican organizations and right-wing interest groups are another means of spreading the Christian Americanist message. For instance, Rafael Cruz spoke to the Texas Home Schooling Coalition Gala in October 2017,³⁵⁰ the Hopkins County Republican Club in September 2018,³⁵¹ the Star Republican Women’s meeting in Horseshoe Bay in September 2018,³⁵² and a STAR Republicans gathering in Frisco, Texas in December 2018.³⁵³ Such gatherings offer a means to build grassroots support for Christian Americanism across the state.

Legislation

At the heart of Christian Americanism is the effort to give conservative Christianity preferential treatment in law and public policy. Accordingly, one might expect Christian Americanist lawmakers in Texas to push legislation explicitly privileging Christianity. It is therefore quite remarkable that relatively few such measures have been filed in recent years, let alone become law. Nonetheless, many other measures have been filed that, while not explicitly privileging Christianity, do advance Christian Americanists’ goal of breaching the wall of church-state separation. If successful, these measures could open the way for more explicitly Christian law and policy in the future.

In a search of legislation filed in regular session from 2009³⁵⁴ through 2019, I have found only five examples of legislation that would *explicitly* privilege the “Judeo-Christian heritage” trumpeted by Christian Americanists.³⁵⁵ First, state Representative Dan Flynn has

filed bills in several sessions that would allow teachers to prominently post the Ten Commandments in classrooms.³⁵⁶ Flynn has justified this legislation on Christian Americanist grounds, as needed “to protect teachers who have the desire to establish that the country’s historical background is based on Judeo-Christian traditions.”³⁵⁷ So far, however, Flynn’s measure has not made it into law.

Second, HB 1815, filed by state Representative Dustin Burrows (R-Lubbock) in the 2015 regular session, would have prohibited school districts from taking adverse employment action against teachers “based on the teacher’s instruction to students about the Bible,” provided that instruction is in accord “with the United States Constitution, federal law, the Texas Constitution, and state law.” Burrows’ bill did not make it out of committee.³⁵⁸

Two more measures, both likewise unsuccessful, would have expanded instruction about the Hebrew Bible and New Testament in public schools. Since the 2009-10 school year, Texas public schools have been allowed to offer an elective on these Jewish and Christian scriptures for grades nine and above.³⁵⁹ HB 3119, filed by state Representative James Landtroop (R-Lubbock) in 2011, would have made such electives available to middle school students as well.³⁶⁰ The far more sweeping SB 2090, filed in 2019 by state Senator Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola), would have *required* that instruction on the Bible be included in public school English classes.³⁶¹

Finally, HCR 17, a resolution filed by state Representative Phil Stephenson (R-Rosenberg) in the 2019 regular session, would have put the legislature on record as supporting “displays of the Ten Commandments in public educational institutions and other government buildings.”³⁶² Like the other measures mentioned here, Stephenson’s resolution did not make it into law.

Still, though legislators have offered few bills *explicitly* privileging Christianity or the “Judeo-Christian tradition,” many other measures filed over the past decade have advanced Christian Americanism’s goal of breaching the wall of church-state separation. They do so, however, in terms of religion generally rather than Christianity (or the “Judeo-Christian tradition”) specifically. While many of these measures were unsuccessful, a few have become law.

HB 308, authored by state Representative Dwayne Bohac (R-Houston) and signed into law in 2013, allows public schools to display Christmas scenes and symbols, provided the school also displays scenes or symbols of more than one religion, or one religion and at least one secular scene or symbol. It also allows students to say “Merry Christmas” and “Happy Hanukkah,” as well as “happy holidays.”³⁶³

Four other legislative examples were less successful. In 2015, state Representative Debbie Riddle’s (R-Houston) HJR 65 proposed a constitutional amendment prohibiting government control or interference with “a student’s voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint at a school event or graduation ceremony.”³⁶⁴ In 2017, HB 735, by state Representative Scott Sanford (R-McKinney), would have allowed “school districts,

employees of a school district, and students . . . to display references or quote versus [sic] from religious texts which are celebrated during time of historic and/or optional holidays.”³⁶⁵ In 2019, two measures, HB 2216 by state Representative Kyle Biedermann (R-Fredericksburg) and SB 679 by state Senator Bob Hall (R-Edgewood), would have required state government buildings to prominently display the national motto, “In God We Trust.”³⁶⁶ Another 2019 bill, HB 4151 by state Representative Mayes Middleton (R-Wallisville), would have allowed public school boards to require a period of prayer before athletic events and after students recite the Pledge of Allegiance.³⁶⁷ None of these bills made it out of committee.

Flynn had more success with his “American Laws for American Courts” (ALAC) legislation, which he justified on Christian Americanist grounds. Though Flynn’s ALAC measures failed in the 2013 and 2015 legislative sessions, a resurrected version passed in 2017 and was signed into law by Governor Abbott.³⁶⁸

Additionally, many Texas legislators have sought to carve out so-called “religious liberty” exemptions that would permit individuals and persons in certain professions to discriminate on the grounds of “sincerely held religious belief.” Such measures have become increasingly common across the United States since the Supreme Court’s 2015 *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision legalized same-sex marriage. Strictly speaking, “religious liberty” measures are not Christian Americanist; yet it is no accident that they are heavily promoted by Christian Americanists. As historian John Fea notes, in the wake of that decision, “GOP politicians and the leaders of the Christian Right began preaching the importance of religious liberty as an essential part of the American founding.”³⁶⁹ Fea notes that “this use of religious freedom by conservative politicians and Christian cultural warriors appears to be little more than a clever new way of asserting Christian nationalism,” since “very few Christian Right defenders of religious liberty have come out strongly in support of the religious liberty of Muslims or other non-Christian groups.”³⁷⁰ The Trump administration, which has close ties to Christian Americanists like Jeffress and Patrick, has given favorable treatment to “religious liberty” exemptions in anti-discrimination cases, prompting critics to argue that the federal government is creating “a license to discriminate against the LGBTQ community and others.”³⁷¹ “Religious liberty” carve-outs are also a major focus of Project Blitz, which is a nationwide effort to push state legislatures to promote conservative Christian values, especially regarding marriage and sexuality, as described in Section 1.³⁷²

A raft of “religious liberty” measures—many bearing a close resemblance to Project Blitz model legislation³⁷³—were filed in the 2019 regular session of the Texas legislature. For instance, SB 17 by state Senator Charles Perry (R-Lubbock), would have prohibited discrimination against occupational license applicants/holders who deny service on grounds of “sincerely held religious belief”; the language of this bill closely resembles that of a Project Blitz model called the “Licensed Professional Civil Rights Act.”³⁷⁴ Perry’s measure passed the Senate, but died in the House. State Senator Bob Hall’s (R-Edgewood) SB 85 would have allowed members of the counseling profession to refuse service on the grounds of religious belief, while state Representative Tom Oliverson’s (R-Cypress) HB

2892 and state Senator Lois Kolkhorst's (R-Brenham) SB 1107 would have extended similar rights of refusal to health care providers.³⁷⁵ Furthermore, state Senator Brian Birdwell's (R-Granbury) SB 1009 would have allowed those authorized to perform weddings to recuse themselves on grounds of religious belief.³⁷⁶ All of the aforementioned bills would have implicitly permitted religion-based discrimination by state license holders against LGBTQ persons and, potentially, other groups. However, none of these measures made it into law.

Even more sweeping in scope, HB 3172 by state Representative Matt Krause (R-Fort Worth) would have prohibited government entities from taking "adverse action against any person" based on that person's "sincerely held religious belief."³⁷⁷ A similarly broad-brush "religious liberty" bill, HB 1035 by state Representative Bill Zedler (R-Arlington), would have prohibited "government discrimination" against any person on grounds of "sincerely held religious beliefs or moral convictions" about marriage and gender identity.³⁷⁸ Both bills would have allowed for widespread religion-based discrimination against LGBTQ persons and, potentially, other groups. Again, these measures did not become law.

Summary

It should be clear from this preliminary survey that Christian Americanists in Texas actively use many different means to promulgate their ideology, including nonprofits, books, and religious and religio-political gatherings. Yet their use of legislation, which should be their most potent means of privileging conservative Christianity and the "Judeo-Christian tradition," remains something of a puzzle, since few measures *explicitly* favoring Christianity have been filed in the past decade. Instead, Christian Americanist lawmakers have promoted bills that advance Christian Americanism's goal of weakening church-state separation, but do so in terms of religion generally. I will consider some possible explanations for this phenomenon in the final section.

Section 4: Concluding Thoughts and Directions for Further Research

Though the findings presented in this report are preliminary, they clearly show how pervasive Christian Americanism is on the Texas political scene, reaching the highest levels of state government. These findings also demonstrate that Christian Americanists in Texas employ a wide variety of means to promulgate the ideology, ranging from public statements, sermons, and writings, to financial donations, mass media, events, and legislation. Christian Americanism is quite evidently an ideology and a movement of considerable significance in the state. Moreover, the push for conservative Christian dominance does not appear to be losing power or influence, even as Christians decline as a share of the U.S. population.³⁷⁹

Several issues merit further study. For instance, does the standard for identifying Christian Americanist activists and lawmakers used in Section 2 adequately encompass adherents of the ideology, or does it overlook activists and politicians who should be included? What is the relationship between nongovernmental activists and Christian Americanist officeholders? How effective are the various means Christian Americanists deploy to promulgate their ideology?

One finding that merits further investigation is the surprising paucity of legislation filed between 2009 and 2019 that would *explicitly* privilege Christianity in law and public policy. Given the core Christian Americanist contention that Christianity has historically had privileged legal status in the U.S. and should have it today, one would expect to see sympathetic legislators introduce bills giving preferential treatment to Christianity or the “Judeo-Christian heritage.” Despite a few scattered counterexamples, it appears that in Texas, Christian Americanism has seldom been deployed in such an explicit way legislatively, at least since 2009. Instead, sympathetic legislators have filed myriad bills that, though not explicitly pro-Christian, would arguably advance the Christian Americanist agenda. These include measures requiring biblical instruction in public schools and allowing school prayer, as well as “religious liberty” legislation. These bills are couched, however, in terms of protecting religion generally (for instance, shielding persons who act according to “sincerely held religious beliefs”), rather than Christianity (or the “Judeo-Christian tradition”) explicitly.

Again, these are preliminary findings; they need to be confirmed through an exhaustive search of legislation filed since 2008 (the period of research for the present study) and an examination of public testimony given in support of that legislation (e.g., committee testimony and floor debates). But if these findings hold up to further scrutiny, then explanation is needed for the apparent disconnect between (a) the public comments asserting the nation’s essentially Christian character, and (b) the rarity of legislation expressly privileging Christian belief and practice. Answering this question would get at the function of Christian Americanism and the purpose it serves in Texas politics. That is, does Christian Americanism function primarily as a legislative agenda, or does its main function lie elsewhere?

One obvious obstacle to explicitly Christian legislation is the First Amendment's establishment clause and the numerous court decisions that prohibit privileging one religion or denomination over others.³⁸⁰ Explicitly pro-Christian measures of the sort suggested by Christian Americanist rhetoric would almost certainly be vulnerable to court challenge, and that prospect might make legislators think twice before introducing such legislation. Yet the likelihood of a court challenge has not stopped Texas lawmakers from enacting controversial legislation, including measures that virtually invite court challenges. For example, the 2017 Omnibus Abortion bill, SB-8, required that all fetal remains be cremated or interred, regardless of the mother's wishes. A federal judge struck down this provision in 2018.³⁸¹

So why have Christian Americanist lawmakers in Texas apparently not followed through on their rhetoric with legislation that would give Christianity preferential treatment? Furthermore, does the apparent lack of legislative follow-through call into question Christian Americanism's effectiveness, and thus its salience, as a political movement? There are at least three explanatory hypotheses that merit testing. They are not mutually exclusive.

Hypothesis 1 is that lawmakers rely on a de facto division of labor between state and church to push the Christian Americanist agenda. In order to shield pro-Christian legislation from court challenges, Christian Americanist lawmakers tend to avoid using explicitly Christian language in legislation or using Christian beliefs to justify the legislation they support. Instead, the task of connecting legislation with conservative Christian beliefs is left to Christian Americanist activists outside government.³⁸²

Hypothesis 2 holds that Christian Americanists are playing the long game, taking an incremental approach to breaking down church-state separation and privileging conservative Christianity. "Religious liberty" laws, even without explicitly pro-Christian language or elements, set legal precedents that could pave the way for more explicitly Christian-preferential legislation in the future. The Project Blitz legislative playbook for 2018-19 appears to suggest that something of the sort may be at work. In discussing a model bill that would require "In God We Trust" to be prominently displayed in government buildings, the playbook's authors note that such a measure "can have enormous impact. Even if it does not become law, it can still provide the basis to shore up later support for other governmental entities to support religious displays."³⁸³ The document points to "In God We Trust" legislation passed by the U.S. House in 2011, and claims that though it never became law, "it still had a significant ripple effect on subsequent measures, policies, and agency actions."³⁸⁴ According to Hypothesis 2, then, Christian Americanist legislative activity is not restricted to legislation that *explicitly* privileges conservative Christianity. Instead, it encompasses measures that promote the broader Christian Americanist agenda, including school prayer and legal shielding of those who discriminate on religious grounds.

Hypothesis 3 is that Christian Americanism functions in Texas politics primarily as a symbolic boundary, and only secondarily as a political program or a legislative agenda.

Thus, the “boundary work”³⁸⁵ done by politicians’ use of Christian Americanist rhetoric is as much the “point” as any actual legislation.

Symbolic boundaries, sociologist Kyle Puetz writes, are “demarcations that distinguish one set of persons, groups, objects, and/or other social entities from another such set.”³⁸⁶ As Rico Neumann and Patricia Moy explain, such boundaries “conceptually categorize individuals or communities . . . creating in-groups and out-groups to draw lines between those who are welcome and those who are not welcome to be part of a community or, more broadly, society. Symbolic boundaries are identity-shaping and used by individuals to separate ‘us’ from ‘them,’ the in-group from the out-group.”³⁸⁷

According to Hypothesis 3, Christian Americanist rhetoric serves to define who is a “real” American and who is not, whose voices count in political discourse, and whose values deserve to be enacted in law and public policy. As Whitehead and Perry note, embracing Christian Americanism “provides the cultural materials used to build walls around American identity, walls that exclude ethnic and religious outsiders,” and walls that establish “native- born, white, Christians” as the only “real” Americans.³⁸⁸ The use of Christian Americanist rhetoric by politicians such as Ted Cruz and Dan Patrick gives them a way to identify themselves as one of “us,” defenders of the nation’s alleged Christian essence, rather than one of “them,” separationists, secularists, liberals (including liberal Christians), non-Christians, and so on. More importantly, Christian Americanist rhetoric also serves to affirm and reinforce conservative Christians’ own sense of identity and moral superiority. In this sense, it functions in much the same way as Donald Trump’s rhetoric with respect to white working-class Americans in the 2016 presidential campaign. As Lamont, Park, and Ayala-Hurtado find, in his campaign speeches, Trump tapped into symbolic boundaries already recognized by white working-class Americans, “legitimizing the view that workers had of their superior position in American society.”³⁸⁹ In this respect, Trump illustrates a general phenomenon identified by Lamont, Park, and Ayala-Hurtado: leading politicians act as “influential cultural intermediaries” whose “boundary work has the potential to resonate with voters’ frustrations and sense of moral worth, as well as with the boundaries they draw toward other groups on these bases.”³⁹⁰

According to Hypothesis 3, Texas politicians’ use of Christian Americanist rhetoric creates boundaries for Texas Christians similar to the way Trump’s rhetoric helped define and consolidate white working-class voters. Consequently, the apparent lack of legislative follow-through does not mean that Christian Americanism is ineffective or politically insignificant. Rather, Christian Americanist rhetoric is, in a sense, an end in itself, alongside the goal of implementing pro-Christian legislation and policy. This hypothesis could also account for the fact (noted in Section 2) that Texas politicians who deploy Christian Americanist rhetoric are often vague about how they would translate biblical teachings or “Judeo-Christian values” into public policy. Such specifics are not necessary to affirm and reinforce the symbolic boundaries Christian Americanists construct.

To test each of these hypotheses, it will be necessary not only to further investigate legislation, public testimony, and nongovernmental supporters' remarks, but also to interview Christian Americanist activists and lawmakers themselves.³⁹¹ Although many Christian Americanist politicians, and perhaps some nongovernmental activists, may be reluctant to detail how they would turn their vision of a Christian America into law and public policy, in-depth interviews could help to tease out the motivations behind and reasons for the apparent disconnect between Christian Americanist rhetoric and legislative activity. It would be quite interesting to learn whether lawmakers and activists recognize that disconnect, and if so, how they account for it.

Whatever the merits and limitations of these hypotheses, Christian Americanism is a force to be reckoned with on the Texas political landscape. Further investigation of the ideology and the movement is essential if we wish to gain a clearer understanding of politics in Texas, and of the relationship between religion and politics generally.

Appendix

An appendix with a detailed annotated bibliography for this research is available at:
<https://doi.org/10.25613/0ssp-2x65>

Endnotes

¹ Michelle Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 25-26.

² David Barton, *The Myth of Separation* (Aledo, TX: WallBuilder Press, 1992), 82.

³ Mark A. Chancey, “Rewriting History for a Christian America: Religion and the Texas Social Studies Controversy of 2009-2010,” *The Journal of Religion* 94, no. 3 (July 2014): 329. Michelle Goldberg writes that Christian nationalism “claims that the Bible is absolutely and literally true. But it goes much further, extrapolating a total political program from that truth, and yoking that program to a political party. It is a conflation of scripture and politics that sees America’s triumphs as confirmation of the truth of the Christian religion.” The movement’s “motivating dream,” she writes, “is the restoration of an imagined Christian nation. With a revisionist history and claims the founders never intended to create a secular country and that separation of church and state is a lie fostered by conniving leftists, Christian nationalism rejects the idea of government religious neutrality.” Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming*, 6-7.

⁴ As Andrew Preston writes, when the term “Judeo-Christian” first came into widespread use in the 1930s, mainly among leftists and centrists, it referred to those beliefs and values shared by Jews and Christians, as opposed the growing religious intolerance of the Nazis and other fascist groups. That sense is still common in some scholarly circles (see, for instance, Alexandra Kogel and David K. Moore, “Equality: Overview,” in *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, ed. Maryanne Cline Horowitz (Farmington Hills, MI: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 2005), 2: 695). However, “Judeo-Christian” had been taken over by the Christian right by the 1980s as a political code word for conservative Christian. Preston notes that the phrase “went from being a unifying term—a centrist nod to religious tolerance—to a badge of identity for Christian conservatives who wanted to chip away at the wall of separation between church and state. Defining America as fundamentally ‘Judeo-Christian’ became a way of staving off secularism at home rather than standing against intolerant ideologies abroad.” Preston also writes that “today, the term tends to be used by Republicans as a way to rally their supporters around a presumed set of traditional values.” Andrew Preston, “A Very Young Judeo-Christian Tradition,” *Boston Globe*, July 1, 2012, <http://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2012/06/30/very-young-judeo-christian-tradition/smZoWrkrSLeMZpLoulZGNL/story.html>. See also Douglas Hartmann, Xuefeng Zhang, and William Wischstadt, “One (Multicultural) Nation Under God? Changing Uses and Meanings of the Term ‘Judeo-Christian’ in the American Media,” *Journal of Media and Religion* 4, no. 4: 207–234.

⁵ Mark Weldon Whitten, *The Myth of “Christian America”: What You Need to Know about the Separation of Church and State* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 1999), 35.

⁶ Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry, *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 118-119.

⁷ Republican Party of Texas, “2008 State Republican Platform,” n.d., http://a.tfn.org/site/DocServer/GOP_FINAL_2008_PLATFORM.pdf?docID=582, 17-18. These paragraphs remained essentially unchanged in the 2016 platform: Republican Party of Texas, “Report of the Permanent Committee on Platform and Resolutions as Amended and Adopted by the 2016 State Convention of the Republican Party of Texas,” n.d., <https://www.texasgop.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/PERM-PLATFORM.pdf>. However, the 2018 platform continued the position: “We urge the Legislature to end censorship of

discussion of religion in our founding documents and encourage discussing those documents, including the Bible as their basis.” Republican Party of Texas, “Report of 2018 Permanent Platform & Resolutions Committee,” June 21, 2018, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1w8jXtiN6w4EYQawWwifMev582LcHR-fQ/view>.

⁸ For instance, in 2015 Perry declared, “I do believe that the Judeo-Christian values that this country was based upon are very much important not only to the history of this country, but the future of this country” (quoted in Rebecca Berg, “Perry Tempers His ‘War on Religion’ Views,” *Real Clear Politics*, June 22, 2015, https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2015/06/22/perry_tempers_his_war_on_religion_views.html). When a state senator, Patrick said that the United States is “a Judeo-Christian nation, primarily a Christian nation” (Forrest Wilder, “God’s Man in the Texas Senate,” *Texas Observer*, September 4, 2013, <http://www.texasobserver.org/gods-man-senate/>).

⁹ Steven K. Green, *Inventing a Christian America: The Myth of the Religious Founding* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 211, 198.

¹⁰ Green, *Inventing a Christian America*, 2.

¹¹ Green, *Inventing a Christian America*, 211, 241.

¹² Kevin M. Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (Philadelphia: Basic Books, 2015), 292-293.

¹³ I should note that it is not necessary for a Christian Americanist to make historical claims; in theory, one could argue that America has never been a Christian nation but should become one. Christian Reconstructionist Gary North makes such an argument, as seen in Section 2. However, North is the exception rather than the rule. Most Christian Americanists ground their efforts to Christianize the nation in appeals to its supposed religious founding, and thus in an essentially historical argument.

¹⁴ The term “cottage industry” is used in Frederick Clarkson, “History is Powerful: Why the Christian Right Distorts History and Why it Matters,” *The Public Eye*, March 5, 2007, <https://www.politicalresearch.org/2007/03/05/history-is-powerfulwhy-the-christian-right-distorts-history-and-why-it-matters>.

¹⁵ Stephen M. Stookey, “In God We Trust?: Evangelical Historiography and the Quest for a Christian America,” pt. 1, *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 41, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 47-51.

¹⁶ Stookey, “In God We Trust?,” pt.1, 47.

¹⁷ Robert Jeffress, “Christian Nation: When Did This Become A Controversy in America?” interview by David Barton, Rick Green, and Tim Barton, WallBuilders, July 18, 2018, <https://wallbuilderslive.com/christian-nation-military-dr-jeffress/>.

¹⁸ David Barton, “Is America a Christian Nation?” WallBuilders, February 14, 2017, <https://wallbuilders.com/america-christian-nation/>.

¹⁹ David Barton, *The Myth of Separation* (Aledo, TX: WallBuilder Press, 1992); Barton, *Original Intent: The Courts, the Constitution, & Religion*, 2nd ed. (Aledo, TX: WallBuilder Press, 1997).

²⁰ Barton, *Original Intent*, 146; Barton, *The Myth*, 24 (emphasis in original).

²¹ Barton, *Original Intent*, 146.

²² Barton, *Original Intent*, 247 (emphasis in original).

²³ Barton, *The Myth*, 37-38.

²⁴ Barton, *The Myth*, 40.

²⁵ Barton, *The Myth*, 28.

²⁶ Barton, *Original Intent*, 31; Barton, *The Myth*, 30.

²⁷ These include Green, *Inventing a Christian America*, especially 7-15; Richard T. Hughes, *Christian America and the Kingdom of God* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009), especially chap. 4; John Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation? A Historical Introduction*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2016); and Kate Carté Engel, "The Founding Fathers in Modern America," in *Faith in the New Millennium: The Future of Religion and American Politics*, ed. Matthew Avery Sutton and Darren Dochuk (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5-20.

²⁸ An interpretation that imposes one's own views.

²⁹ Stookey, "In God We Trust?," pt.1, 42-43.

³⁰ Stookey, "In God We Trust?," pt.1, 60.

³¹ Stookey, "In God We Trust?," pt.1, 63.

³² Ibid.

³³ Stookey, "In God We Trust?," pt.1, 64.

³⁴ Stookey, "In God We Trust," pt. 2, 20.

³⁵ Stookey, "In God We Trust," pt. 2, 20.

³⁶ Stookey, "In God We Trust," pt. 2, 23. This omission also characterizes Barton's treatment of the ordinance in *The Myth* and *Original Intent*.

³⁷ Stookey, "In God We Trust," pt. 2, 25.

³⁸ Stookey, "In God We Trust," pt. 2, 28-29.

³⁹ Stookey, "In God We Trust," pt. 2, 29-30.

⁴⁰ Stookey, "In God We Trust," pt. 2, 31.

⁴¹ Stookey, "In God We Trust," pt. 2, 36.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Hughes, *Christian America*, 152. Hughes characterizes the rise of the religious right as a "rebirth of fundamentalism" in response to the social upheavals of the 1960s, including the antiwar and civil rights movements and the influx of non-Christian immigrants after 1965 (150-52).

⁴⁴ Hughes, *Christian America*, 155-56, 153.

⁴⁵ Kruse, *One Nation Under God*, 276-280, 281

⁴⁶ Kruse, *One Nation Under God*, 278.

⁴⁷ Kruse, *One Nation Under God*, 285.

- ⁴⁸ Wallbuilders, “About Us,” <https://wallbuilders.com/about-us/>; David Barton, *The Myth*, 82.
- ⁴⁹ Hughes, *Christian America*, 115.
- ⁵⁰ Tara Isabella Burton, “Understanding the fake historian behind America’s religious right,” *Vox*, January 25, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/identities/2018/1/25/16919362/understanding-the-fake-historian-behind-americas-religious-right>.
- ⁵¹ Hughes, *Christian America*, 157.
- ⁵² Quoted in Kruse, *One Nation Under God*, 291-292.
- ⁵³ Whitehead and Perry, *Taking America Back*, ix.
- ⁵⁴ Andrew L. Whitehead, Joseph O. Baker, and Samuel L. Perry, “Make America Christian Again: Christian Nationalism and Voting for Donald Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election,” *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review*, 79, no. 2 (January 2019): 147–171; Rickey Ciapha Dennis Jr., “Half of Southerners believe the US was founded as ‘explicitly Christian,’ new poll finds,” *The Post and Courier*, December 29, 2018, https://www.postandcourier.com/features/faith_and_values/half-of-southerners-believe-the-us-was-founded-as-explicitly/article_fb197bc0-046f-11e9-bd6f-b3b822531d13.html.
- ⁵⁵ Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation, *Report and Analysis on Religious Freedom Measures Impacting Prayer and Faith in America (2017 Version)* (Chesapeake, VA: Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation, 2017), 4, 6, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwfCh32HsC3UYmV0NUp5cXZjT28/view>.
- ⁵⁶ Frederick Clarkson, “‘Project Blitz’ Seeks to Do for Christian Nationalism What ALEC Does for Big Business,” *Rewire.News*, April 27, 2018, <https://rewire.news/religion-dispatches/2018/04/27/project-blitz-seeks-christian-nationalism-alec-big-business/>.
- ⁵⁷ Clarkson, “‘Project Blitz’ Seeks.”
- ⁵⁸ See, for instance, Yonat Shimron, “A campaign to blitz the country with ‘In God We Trust’ laws takes root,” *Religion News*, July 2, 2018, <https://religionnews.com/2018/07/02/a-campaign-to-blitz-the-country-with-in-god-we-trust-laws-takes-root/>; Katharine Stewart, “A Christian Nationalist Blitz,” *New York Times*, May 26, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/26/opinion/project-blitz-christian-nationalists.html>; David Taylor, “Project Blitz: the legislative assault by Christian nationalists to reshape America,” *The Guardian*, June 4, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/04/project-blitz-the-legislative-assault-by-christian-nationalists-to-reshape-america>; Julie Zauzmer, “A conservative Christian group is pushing Bible classes in public schools nationwide—and it’s working,” *Washington Post*, May 8, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/a-conservative-christian-group-is-pushing-bible-classes-in-public-schools-nationwide--and-its-working/2019/05/08/f3bb490e-39e8-11e9-a06c-3ec8ed509d15_story.html?utm_term=.fcc0116d6bc5. This increased visibility is largely due to the efforts of Frederick Clarkson of Political Research Associates, who appears to have been the first to write about Project Blitz and who has continued to spotlight the effort in subsequent articles. These include: Clarkson, “‘Project Blitz’ Seeks”; Frederick Clarkson, “Faith-Baiting in Minnesota and Elsewhere Follows the ‘Project Blitz’ Playbook,” *Rewire.News*, May 16, 2018, <https://rewire.news/religion-dispatches/2018/05/16/faith-baiting-minnesota-elsewhere-follows-project-blitz-playbook/>; Frederick Clarkson,

“Ringing in a Christian Nationalist 2019 With an Even Larger Legislative Playbook,” *Rewire.News*, December 18, 2018, <https://rewire.news/religion-dispatches/2018/12/18/ringing-in-a-christian-nationalist-2019-with-an-even-larger-legislative-playbook/>; and Frederick Clarkson, “A Recent Local Controversy Reveals the Theocratic Heart of ‘Project Blitz,’” *Rewire.News*, June 24, 2019, <https://rewire.news/religion-dispatches/2019/06/24/a-recent-local-controversy-may-reveal-the-soft-theocracy-at-the-heart-of-project-blitz/>.

⁵⁹ The 2018-19 version is available at Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation, *Report and Analysis on Religious Freedom Measures Impacting Prayer and Faith in America (2018-19 Version)* (Chesapeake, VA: Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation, 2018), https://rewire.news/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Report-and-Analysis-on-Religious-Freedom-Measures-Impacting-Prayer-and-Faith_2018-2019.pdf.

⁶⁰ Clarkson, “Project Blitz’ Seeks.”

⁶¹ Shimron, “A campaign to blitz the country.”

⁶² David R. Brockman, *Religious Imbalance in the Texas Social Studies Curriculum: Analysis and Recommendations* (Houston, TX: James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy of Rice University, 2016), <http://www.bakerinstitute.org/research/religious-imbalance-texas-social-studies-curriculum/>.

⁶³ Republican Party of Texas, “2004 State Republican Party Platform,” n.d., 8, <http://www.fogal.org/rptplatform2004.pdf>.

⁶⁴ This plank persists in the 2018 platform of the Texas Republican Party. Republican Party of Texas, “Report of 2018 Permanent Platform & Resolutions Committee,” 26, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1w8jXtiN6w4EYQawWwifMev582LcHR-fQ/view>.

⁶⁵ See note 7 above.

⁶⁶ Wilder, “God’s Man in the Texas Senate.”

⁶⁷ Edwards uses the term “Christian nationalism.” Mark Edwards, “Christian Nationalism in the United States” —Ebook Introduction,” *Religions* 8, no. 5 (May 2017): 93. On the current presence of Christian nationalism on the Christian right, see for example, David Briggs, “The rise and fall (and rise?) of Christian nationalism,” *Christian Century*, December 21, 2016, <https://www.christiancentury.org/article/news-analysis/rise-and-fall-and-rise-christian-nationalism>, 16; John Fea, “Using the Past to ‘Save’ Our Nation: The Debate over Christian America,” *OAH Magazine of History* 27, no. 1 (2013): 7-11; and Hugh Hecl, “Is America a Christian Nation?” *Political Science Quarterly* 122, no. 1 (Spring, 2007): 59-87.

⁶⁸ Chancey, “Rewriting History”; Mark A. Chancey, “Teaching about Religion in Red-state America,” in *Religion and Politics in Twenty-First Century America*, ed. Matthew Sutton and Darren Dochuk (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), 163-179; Brockman, *Religious Imbalance*; David R. Brockman, “Educating for Pluralism, or Against It? Lessons from Texas and Québec on Teaching Religion in the Public Schools,” *Religion & Education* 43, no. 3 (2016): 317-343; David R. Brockman, “Despite Reversal on Hillary and Hellen Keller, ‘Christian Americanist’ Bias Remains in Texas Curriculum,” *Rewire.News*, November 19, 2018, <https://rewire.news/religion-dispatches/2018/11/19/despite-reversal-on-hillary-and-hellen-keller-christian-americanist-bias-remains-in-texas-curriculum/>.

⁶⁹ Whitehead and Perry, *Taking America Back*, 161-62.

⁷⁰ Robert N. Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus* 134, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 42, 49. Republication of essay originally published in 1967.

⁷¹ Robert N. Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” 45. Elsewhere in the essay he writes, “This religion—there seems no other word for it—while not antithetical to and indeed sharing much in common with Christianity, was neither sectarian nor in any specific sense Christian.” Robert N. Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” 46.

⁷² Kenneth D. Wald and Allison Calhoun-Brown, *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 8th ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 51.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ For more on the conservative Christian push for “In God We Trust” legislation, see David Taylor, “‘In God We Trust’ - the bills Christian nationalists hope will ‘protect religious freedom,’” *The Guardian*, January 14, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jan/14/christian-nationalists-bills-religious-freedom-project-blitz>.

⁷⁶ Michelle Goldberg, “Dominionism: Michele Bachmann and Rick Perry’s Dangerous Religious Bond,” *The Daily Beast*, August 14, 2011, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/dominionism-michele-bachmann-and-rick-perrys-dangerous-religious-bond>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Michelle Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming*, 13.

⁷⁹ Frederick Clarkson, “Dominionism Rising: A Theocratic Movement Hiding in Plain Sight,” *The Public Eye*, Summer 2016, 13-14, <https://www.politicalresearch.org/2016/08/18/dominionism-rising-a-theocratic-movement-hiding-in-plain-sight>. For an account of how Clarkson and Chip Berlet developed the term “dominionism,” see Chip Berlet, “How We Coined the Term ‘Dominionism,’” *Daily Kos*, September 7, 2011, <https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2011/9/7/1014197/->. Some scholars and pundits argue that the dominionist label is inaccurate or misleading. For instance, conservative columnist Ross Douthat argues that many of the figures called dominionists “would disavow the label, many definitions of dominionism conflate several very different Christian political theologies, and there’s a lively debate about whether the term is even useful at all.” Ross Douthat, “The New Yorker and Francis Schaeffer,” *New York Times*, August 29, 2011, <https://douthat.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/08/29/the-new-yorker-and-francis-schaeffer/>. For other critiques, see Jeremy Pierce, “Dominionismists,” *First Things*, August 14, 2011, <https://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2011/08/dominionismists/>; and Robert Gagnon and Edith Humphrey, “Stop Calling Ted Cruz a Dominionist,” *Christianity Today*, April 6, 2016, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/april-web-only/stop-calling-ted-cruz-dominionist.html>. Whatever the value of these critiques, they are beyond the scope of the current work.

⁸⁰ Frederick Clarkson, “Dominionism Rising,” 14.

⁸¹ Frederick Clarkson, “Dominionism Rising,” 13. Another figure often mentioned in connection with Rushdoony and Christian Reconstructionism is Francis Schaeffer, called by one historian “evangelicalism’s most important public intellectual in the twenty years before his death” in 1984. Though he rejected theocracy, including Rushdoony’s theonomic

order, and thus cannot be categorized as a Christian Reconstructionist, Schaeffer argued in *A Christian Manifesto* (1981) that America had begun as a Christian nation (the founders, he claimed, had taken their political theories from English puritans), but had deviated from its original character under the influence of secular humanism; Christians, he said, had a duty to resist secular humanist influence on government—though he was ambiguous about how they should do so. His work profoundly influenced Christian Americanism. As author Frances FitzGerald writes: “In the wake of Schaeffer’s *Manifesto*, making up the beliefs of the Founders, often with the help of invented, or out-of-context, quotations, became a small industry,” the leading practitioner of which is David Barton. Frances FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017), 347-63. See also William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America*, (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 159-61, 194-97.

⁸² Julie J. Ingersoll, *Building God’s Kingdom: Inside the World of Christian Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 236.

⁸³ Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 353.

⁸⁴ Theonomy refers to the Reconstructionist belief that “all areas of life must be brought under a comprehensive biblical worldview.” Frederick Clarkson, “Dominionism Rising,” 16.

⁸⁵ Frederick Clarkson, “Dominionism Rising,” 14.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Frederick Clarkson, “The Rise of Dominionism: Remaking America as a Christian Nation,” Political Research Associates, December 5, 2005, <https://www.politicalresearch.org/2005/12/05/the-rise-of-dominionismremaking-america-as-a-christian-nation/>.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Michael DeCesare, “Toward an Interpretive Approach to Social Movement Leadership,” *International Review of Modern Sociology* 39, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 239-257.

⁹¹ A 2019 survey of 41,000 Americans conducted by the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation “found that in the highest-performing state, only 53 percent of the people were able to earn a passing grade for U.S. history. People in every other state failed; in the lowest-performing state, only 27 percent were able to pass.” The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, “Woodrow Wilson Foundation Finds Only One State Can Pass U.S. Citizenship Exam,” February 15, 2019, <https://woodrow.org/news/one-state-pass-us-citizenship-exam/>. Another study found that 63% of Texas respondents scored an F on basic American history. The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, “Woodrow Wilson Foundation American History Initiative: 50-State Survey Data,” April 2019, <https://woodrow.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/WW-AHI-50-State-Data-Pamphlet-3-20-19.pdf>.

⁹² Evan Smith, “Video: Dan Patrick at The Texas Tribune Festival,” *Texas Tribune*, October 16, 2015, <https://www.texastribune.org/2015/10/16/video-dan-patrick-at-the-texas-tribune-festival/>; David R. Brockman, “Special Session a ‘Battle Royal’ for Dominionists Who Seek Christian Rule,” *Texas Observer*, August 9, 2017, <https://www.texasobserver.org/dominionism-special-session-texas/>.

⁹³ For Patrick’s way of discussing the bill, see, Diane Smith, “Patrick: Bathroom bill a top priority for Texas lawmakers,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 5, 2017, <https://www.star-telegram.com/news/local/community/fort-worth/article124785949.html>. For an example of a nongovernmental activist speech about the bill, see Southern Baptists of Texas Convention spokesperson Gary Ledbetter’s defense of the bill: “The . . . Convention supports protecting the privacy and safety of women and children in public bathrooms, showers and locker rooms. . . . We affirm that gender identity is determined by God through biological sex and not by self-perception.” Office of the Texas Governor, “Governor Abbott Announces Growing Support For Privacy Protection Legislation,” July 25, 2017, <https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-announces-growing-support-for-privacy-protection-legislatio>; or Conservative Republicans of Texas News editor-in-chief Jared Woodfill’s reference to “conservative Biblical values” in “Hurrah! Texas Senate Passes SB 6 by 21-10 the ‘No Men in Women’s Bathroom’s Bill,’ CRTX News Mobilizes over 30,000 Voters’ Calls Headed to House for Approval,” CRTXNews, March 15, 2017, <https://crtxnews.com/hurrah-texas-senate-passes-sb-6-21-10-no-men-womens-bathrooms-bill-crtx-news-mobilizes-30000-voters-calls-headed-house-approval/>.

⁹⁴ See Section I for a discussion of the differences between Christian Americanism and American civil religion.

⁹⁵ Mark A. Chancey, “Rewriting History for a Christian America: Religion and the Texas Social Studies Controversy of 2009-2010,” *The Journal of Religion* 94, no. 3 (July 2014): 329.

⁹⁶ Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?*, xix.

⁹⁷ “David Barton,” *Time*, February 7, 2005, http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1993235_1993243_1993261,00.html.

⁹⁸ Texas Freedom Network, “David Barton: Amateur Historian, Professional Propagandist,” n.d., <https://tfn.org/david-barton-watch/profile-of-david-barton/>.

⁹⁹ Zachary Mider, “PAC Built by Ted Cruz Mega-Donors Gets Evangelical Leader,” *Bloomberg*, September 9, 2015, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-09-09/pac-built-by-ted-cruz-mega-donors-gets-evangelical-leader>.

¹⁰⁰ Kyle Mantyla, “David Barton Advocates Seven Mountains Dominionism,” *Right Wing Watch*, April 4, 2011, <https://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/david-barton-advocates-seven-mountains-dominionism/>.

¹⁰¹ Wallbuilders, “David Barton’s Bio, accessed July 10, 2018,” <https://wallbuilders.com/bios/#>.

¹⁰² Heather Digby Parton, “The GOP primary’s theocratic X-factor: Inside the twisted worldview and junk history of David Barton,” *Salon*, October 27, 2015, https://www.salon.com/2015/10/27/the_gop_primarys_theocratic_x_factor_inside_the_t_wisted_worldview_and_junk_history_of_david_barton/.

¹⁰³ Chancey, “Rewriting History for a Christian America,” 334.

¹⁰⁴ Paul Harvey, “Pulling Us Back In: David Barton, Ted Cruz, and the Evangelical Grassroots,” *Religion & Politics*, September 14, 2015, <https://religionandpolitics.org/2015/09/14/pulling-us-back-in-david-barton-ted-cruz-and-the-evangelical-grassroots/>.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Peter Montgomery, “Meet the Billionaire Brothers You Never Heard of Who Fund the Religious Right,” *The American Prospect*, June 13, 2014, <http://prospect.org/article/meet-billionaire-brothers-you-never-heard-who-fund-religious-right>. “In addition to his ‘Christian Nation’ history,” Montgomery writes, “Barton argues that the Bible opposes the minimum wage, progressive taxation, capital gains taxes, the estate tax, and unions and collective bargaining.”

¹⁰⁸ Elise Hu, “Publisher Pulls Controversial Thomas Jefferson Book, Citing Loss Of Confidence,” NPR, August 9, 2012, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2012/08/09/158510648/publisher-pulls-controversial-thomas-jefferson-book-citing-loss-of-confidence>; Molly Driscoll, “‘The Jefferson Lies’ is recalled by publisher Thomas Nelson,” *Christian Science Monitor*, August 13, 2012, <https://www.csmonitor.com/Books/chapter-and-verse/2012/0813/The-Jefferson-Lies-is-recalled-by-publisher-Thomas-Nelson>; Jennifer Schuessler, “And the Worst Book of History Is. . .,” *New York Times*, July 16, 2012, <https://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/16/and-the-worst-book-of-history-is/>. See also historian John Fea’s discussion of the controversy in Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?*, 247-49. David Barton, *The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You’ve Always Believed about Thomas Jefferson* (Washington, D.C.: WND Books, 2016).

¹⁰⁹ Wallbuilders, “About Us.”

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Brockman, *Religious Imbalance in the Texas Social Studies Curriculum*, 9-10. See also Chancey, “Rewriting History for a Christian America,” 333-34, 338-42, 346-48.

¹¹⁴ Ingersoll writes that Barton’s presentation style “makes on-the-spot critical engagement difficult. He jumps, at lightning speed, from one piece of data to another, interpreted through his ‘biblical’ framework; he creates a barrage of information, tied to small pieces of familiar truth and rooted in an apparently vast collection of primary documents.” Ingersoll, *Building God’s Kingdom*, 191.

¹¹⁵ David Barton, “Is America A Christian Nation?,” InTouch Ministries, March 3, 2010, <https://www.intouch.org/listen/messages/is-america-a-christian-nation-david-barton-radio>.

¹¹⁶ For instance, Jefferson biographer Joseph J. Ellis notes that the third president was “a deist who admired the ethical teachings of Jesus as a man rather than as the son of God. (In modern-day parlance, he was a secular humanist.)” Joseph J. Ellis, *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Random House, 1996), 310. For a short discussion of Franklin’s deism, see Thomas S. Kidd, “How Benjamin Franklin, a deist, became the founding father of a unique kind of American faith,” *The Washington Post*, June 28, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/06/28/how-benjamin-franklin-a-deist-became-the-founding-father-of-a-unique-kind-of-american-faith/?utm_term=.0ef841d4460a.

¹¹⁷ Historian John Fea makes a similar point: Christian Americanist writers like Barton “assume that if the founders were Christians, then they must have opposed the separation of church and state and favored the establishment of Christianity as the official national religion.” Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?*, 68.

¹¹⁸ Barton, *The Myth of Separation*, 46.

¹¹⁹ Barton, *The Myth of Separation*, 45.

¹²⁰ Barton, *The Myth of Separation*, 20.

¹²¹ Barton, *The Myth of Separation*, 259. He makes similar arguments in Barton, *Original Intent*.

¹²² Barton, “Is America a Christian Nation?”

¹²³ David Barton, “Christian Nation: When Did This Become A Controversy in America?” interview with Robert Jeffress.

¹²⁴ David Barton, “Biblical Christianity: The Origin of the Rights of Conscience,” WallBuilders, December 29, 2016, <https://wallbuilders.com/biblical-christianity-origin-rights-conscience/>.

¹²⁵ Nicola Menzie, “Glenn Beck, Born-Again Mormon Christian, Defends Fellowship Church Pastor Ed Young Amid ‘Attacks,’” *Christian Post*, July 2, 2015, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/glenn-beck-born-again-mormon-christian-defends-fellowship-church-pastor-ed-young-amid-attacks.html>.

¹²⁶ Glenn Beck and Kevin Balfe, *Arguing with Idiots: How to Stop Small Minds and Big Government* (New York: Mercury Radio Arts, 2009), 287-88.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Glenn Beck, “Religious Freedom: The Four-Part Series,” glennbeck.com, March 26, 2016, <https://www.glennbeck.com/2016/03/26/religious-freedom-the-four-part-series/>.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid. In a 2011 book, Beck claims that “in the beginning, it was God who brought us [Americans] all together. Restoring His place in the country is the first step toward restoring the union.” Due to the lack of specifically Christian content, however, this statement can also be interpreted as an expression of American civil religion. Glenn Beck, *The Original Argument: The Federalists’ Case for the Constitution, Adapted for the 21st Century* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2011), 18.

¹³² Kyle Mantyla, “Glenn Beck: ‘The Founders Used The Bible As The Compass’ For Writing The Constitution,” Right Wing Watch, April 5, 2016, <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/glenn-beck-the-founders-used-the-bible-as-the-compass-for-writing-the-constitution/>.

¹³³ According to Bloomberg, Beck founded Blaze Media, LLC in 2011. Headquartered in Irving, Texas, “Blaze Media, LLC operates as a conservative-leaning pay television network. Blaze Media, LLC was formerly known as TheBlaze Inc. and changed its name to Blaze Media, LLC in December 2018. . . . Blaze Media, LLC operates as a subsidiary of Mercury

Radio Arts, Inc.” Bloomberg, “Company Overview of Blaze Media, LLC,” February 19, 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/research/stocks/private/snapshot.asp?privcapid=232699699>.

¹³⁴ “David Barton’s ‘The Founders Bible’ on TheBlaze TV w/ Glenn Beck,” GlennBeckBookList, September 30, 2012, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7QYxnsIKYfU>.

¹³⁵ “Foundations of Freedom: Gun rights – TheBlaze,” January 16, 2013, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tCKKryoaNo>. Also, in a 2014 conversation otherwise devoted to undocumented migrants, Barton claims there is a biblical basis for early U.S. suffrage laws. “Glenn Beck: David Barton On Immigration,” July 13, 2014, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvnuZvO1_rM.

¹³⁶ “Radio Clips,” The Glenn Beck Show, July 6, 2010, <https://www.glennbeck.com/content/articles/article/198/42502/>.

¹³⁷ Sophia Li, “Controversial Commentator Starts Online ‘University,’” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 7, 2010, <https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/controversial-commentator-starts-online-university/25352>.

¹³⁸ Glenn Beck, “5/17/17 – Hour 1,” Glenn Beck Program, May 17, 2017, audio, <https://www.glennbeck.com/content/audio/51717-hour-1/>. See also Kyle Mantyla, “Glenn Beck And David Barton Launch ‘Historic Apprentice Program’ To Train A New Generation Of Right-Wing Pseudo-Historians,” Right Wing Watch, May 17, 2017, <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/glenn-beck-and-david-barton-launch-historic-apprentice-program-to-train-a-new-generation-of-right-wing-pseudo-historians/>.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Mercury One, “Leadership Training Program,” 2019, <https://mercuryone.org/education/leadership-training-program/>.

¹⁴² Mercury One, “Teachers Conference,” 2019, <https://mercuryone.org/education/teachers/>.

¹⁴³ Glenn Beck, *Glenn Beck’s Common Sense: The Case Against an Out-of-Control Government, Inspired by Thomas Paine* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2009), 98-99.

¹⁴⁴ Stephen E. Strang, *God and Donald Trump* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma Media, 2017), 58.

¹⁴⁵ Erik Eckholm, “An Iowa Stop in a Broad Effort to Revitalize the Religious Right,” *New York Times*, April 2, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/03/us/politics/03pastor.html>.

¹⁴⁶ Peter Montgomery, “Christian Nationalists and Dominionists Set Their Sights on California,” Right Wing Watch, September 5, 2018, <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/christian-nationalists-dominionists-set-their-sights-on-california/>.

¹⁴⁷ David Lane, “The American Renewal Project Mission,” American Renewal Project, August 2018, <http://theamericanrenewalproject.org/2018/08/the-american-renewal-project-mission/>.

¹⁴⁸ Lane, “The American Renewal Project Mission.”

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¹⁵⁰ David Lane, “Indecency, sin and today's Whig Party,” *World News Daily*, March 14, 2013, <https://www.wnd.com/2013/03/indecency-sin-and-todays-whig-party/>.

¹⁵¹ Brian Tashman, “Meet David Lane: The Anti-Gay, Christian-Nation Extremist Of The RNC,” *Right Wing Watch*, January 29, 2015, http://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/meet-david-lane-the-anti-gay-christian-nation-extremist-of-the-rnc/?_ga=2.72812563.1404118530.1537898216-1703690774.1537898216.

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¹⁵⁴ Kyle Mantyla, “Influential Religious Right Organizer David Lane Admits ‘I’m Actually a Political Operative,’” *Right Wing Watch*, December 5, 2012, <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/influential-religious-right-organizer-david-lane-admits-im-actually-a-political-operative/>.

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³⁵⁴ The first Texas legislative session in the time frame under study met in 2009.

³⁵⁵ To conduct this search, I used Texas Legislature Online (<https://capitol.texas.gov/Home.aspx>). I used the “Bill Search” feature with the search term “Religion” to produce a list of religion-related measures for each legislative session from 2009 through 2019, and then examined each measure individually, to determine whether it explicitly privileged Christianity, served to weaken church-state separation, or had no substantial Christian Americanist content. I also performed a text search using the search term “Christian.”

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³⁵⁷ Americans United for Separation of Church and State, “Bill Would Allow Texas Teachers To Post Commandments.”

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³⁵⁹ Texas Education Code, Sec. 28.011, <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.28.htm#28.011>. The implementation of this law has been the subject of significant controversy and criticism; see Mark A. Chancey, *Reading, Writing & Religion II: Texas Public School Bible Courses in 2011-12* (Texas Freedom

Network Education Fund, 2013),
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<https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=86R&Bill=HCR17>.

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<https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=83R&Bill=SB665>.

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<https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=84R&Bill=HJR65>.

³⁶⁵ 2017 House Bill 735,
<https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=85R&Bill=HB735>.

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<https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=86R&Bill=HB2216>; 2019 Senate Bill 679, <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=86R&Bill=SB679>.

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<https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=86R&Bill=HB4151>.

³⁶⁸ “Texas Gov Signs Off,” Christian Broadcasting Network. Flynn’s 2013 HJR 43 and 2015 HJR 32 both died in committee. Two similar ALAC bills, filed by state representative Bill Zedler (R-Arlington) in 2013 and 2015, likewise didn’t make it out of committee. 2013 House Joint Resolution 43, <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=83R&Bill=HJR43>; 2013 House Bill 288, <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=83R&Bill=HB288>; 2015 House Bill 828, <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/Text.aspx?LegSess=84R&Bill=HB828>; [2015 House Joint Resolution HJR 32](https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=84R&Bill=HJR32), <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=84R&Bill=HJR32>.

³⁶⁹ Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?*, 250-51.

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³⁷¹ Matt Ford, “Religious Liberty or Discrimination?” *The Atlantic*, October 6, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/10/religious-liberty-or-lgbt-discrimination/542325/>.

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³⁷³ For a detailed discussion of the links between 2019 legislation in Texas and the Project Blitz legislative playbook, see Chris Tackett, “Project Blitz and the Texas Lege,” Medium,

March 13, 2019, <https://medium.com/@cjtackett/project-blitz-and-the-texas-lege-4247d767412f>.

³⁷⁴ 2019 Senate Bill 17, <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/Text.aspx?LegSess=86R&Bill=SB17>. As for the Project Blitz model bill, see Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation, *Report and Analysis on Religious Freedom Measures Impacting Prayer and Faith in America (2018-19 Version)*, 107. A similar measure, HB 2827, died in committee: 2019 House Bill 2827, <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=86R&Bill=HB2827>.

³⁷⁵ 2019 Senate Bill 85, <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/history.aspx?LegSess=86R&Bill=SB85>; 2019 House Bill 2892, <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=86R&Bill=HB2892>; 2019 Senate Bill 1107, <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=86R&Bill=SB1107>.

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³⁷⁸ 2019 House Bill 1035, <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=86R&Bill=HB1035>.

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³⁸¹ Marissa Evans, “Judge strikes down Texas law requiring burial or cremation of fetal remains,” *Texas Tribune*, September 5, 2018, <https://www.texastribune.org/2018/09/05/fetal-remains-texas-ruling-abortion-rights/>.

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³⁸³ Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation, *Report and Analysis on Religious Freedom Measures Impacting Prayer and Faith in America (2018-19 Version)*, 5.

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