

# [***The politics of religion as Trump sells Bibles and Biden is criticized over Easter eggs***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BP9-BD01-DY7V-G005-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Former President Donald Trump is literally selling religion to his followers in the form of commemorative Bibles, while President Joe Biden is being [*criticized by Republicans for allegedly disrespecting the Easter holiday*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/30/politics/easter-trans-day-visibility-trump-biden-johnson/index.html).

Biden is the more overtly religious of the two, a lifelong practicing Catholic who has publicly struggled to reconcile his own feelings about issues like abortion with his party's focus on protecting the rights of American women.

Trump, meanwhile, is flirting with Christian nationalism in his promises to "Make America Pray Again" if elected and his incorporation of terms like "persecution" into his public complaints about [*his many legal problems*](https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2023/07/politics/trump-indictments-criminal-cases/).

CNN's AJ Willingham wrote about the echoes of Christian nationalism in Trump's licensing of his name to the "God Bless the USA" Bible, which the former president encourages his followers to buy for $59.99. The version of the Bible Trump is selling also includes the US Constitution and other founding documents. Fusing Christianity and patriotism in this way is problematic, the historian Jemar Tisby told Willingham.

"What's so pernicious about this is it plays on people's devotion to God and their love of country, either of which by themselves could be innocuous or even good," Tisby said.

"But in this effort, it is blending the two. And with Trump as the spokesperson, is conveying a very clear message about what kind of Christianity and what kind of love of nation (he is) promoting." [*Read Willingham's full report.*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/28/us/donald-trump-bible-christianity-cec/index.html)

Sen. Raphael Warnock, the Georgia Democrat who is also the senior pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, told CNN's Dana Bash on Sunday that the Bibles are in line with other products that have borne Trump's name: steaks, sneakers and now Scriptures.

But the larger fusing of public policy and religion is something different than [*selling golden sneakers*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/17/politics/trump-sneakers-pay-millions-new-york-trial/index.html).

While the country was built around the principle of separating church and state, Warnock argued, today religion is "being used again, as one more proxy, as a tool in the culture wars."

Biden, meanwhile, was criticized on Sunday on "[*Face the Nation*](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/wilton-cardinal-gregory-ret-reverend-mariann-budde-face-the-nation-transcript-03-31-2024/)" by the archbishop of Washington, Wilton Cardinal Gregory, for picking and choosing elements of Catholicism.

While Gregory said Biden is sincere in his faith, on "life issues," for instance, Biden is not explicit enough with his personal views.

"There is a phrase that we have used in the past: a 'cafeteria Catholic,' you choose that which is attractive and dismiss that which is challenging," Gregory said.

Harsher criticism came from Biden's political rivals, who seized on the fact that the president carried on the recent tradition of declaring March 31 as the Transgender Day of Visibility. It also happened to be Easter Sunday, meaning the two days coincided this year by chance.

"The Biden White House has betrayed the central tenet of Easter-which is the resurrection of Jesus Christ," House Speaker Mike Johnson wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

"Banning sacred truth and tradition-while at the same time proclaiming Easter Sunday as 'Transgender Day'-is outrageous and abhorrent. The American people are taking note," Johnson added.

During the [*White House Easter Egg Roll*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/01/politics/white-house-easter-egg-roll/index.html) Monday, Biden told reporters that Johnson was "[*uninformed*](https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/4567718-biden-johnson-easter-transgender-day-visibility-criticism/)." Conservative critics, in a similar vein as the so-called annual "[*war on Christmas*](https://www.cnn.com/2012/12/07/opinion/stanley-war-on-christmas/index.html)," also tried to attack Biden over the Easter Egg Roll, accusing him of banning religious-themed designs at White House Easter events, although it turns out that long-standing policy was also in place when Trump was president, according to White House aides.

These mini-dramas over religious signaling - Easter eggs as an avenue of freedom of religious expression? - can feel silly, but there are larger issues and changes in the religious makeup of the country.

While most Americans support the idea of separating church and state and few want to see the US declared a Christian nation, according to a [*Pew Research Center survey*](https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2024/03/15/christianitys-place-in-politics-and-christian-nationalism/) released in March, there is a divide over what role the Bible should play in public life.

Nearly half the country, 49%, said the Bible should have "a great deal" or "some" influence on US laws compared with 51% who say the Bible should have "not much" or no influence at all. There is, not surprisingly, a partisan split here. About two-thirds of Republicans say the Bible should influence US laws compared with one-third of Democrats.

A March survey [*from PRRI*](https://www.prri.org/research/religious-change-in-america/) confirms the general move of Americans away from organized religion. The only major religious denomination currently growing in the US is "unaffiliated."

Separately, [*PRRI research from February*](https://www.prri.org/press-release/first-of-its-kind-survey-maps-support-for-christian-nationalism-across-all-50-states/?src=newsroom) marks the importance of Christian nationalism in Trump's political base.

More than 30% of Americans might qualify as sympathetic to Christian nationalism when it is defined within the idea that America was meant by God to be a Christian nation. There are some blue states like Massachusetts and Oregon in which fewer than 20% of residents are sympathetic to this idea, and red states, like North Dakota and Mississippi, where half of residents are sympathetic, according to PRRI. People sympathetic to Christian nationalismare also more likely to condone the idea that political violence may be justified.

"This survey illustrates how strongly this dangerous political theology is driving support for Donald Trump and the MAGA movement and how thoroughly it has established itself as an ideological keystone in today's Republican Party," said PRRI president and founder Robert Jones in releasing the study.

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