An Ecclesiastical Court: Christian Nationalism and Perceptions of the U.S. Supreme Court

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Abstract

Recently, scholars have increasingly examined the unique blending of Christian and political ideology known as Christian nationalism. During this period, the U.S. Supreme Court has increasingly ruled in ways that favor Christian nationalism, and Court watchers have criticized several justices for showing bias toward Christianity at best and Christian nationalism at worst. We use two large, nationally representative samples to examine the connection between Christian nationalism and attitudes about the Court. Observationally, we ask if this ideology relates to support for the Court's decision to overturn abortion rights and agreement with the use of non-legal and religious logic in decisions. Experimentally, we test whether exposure to a story about Justice Alito flying a Christian nationalist flag can legitimate the use of religious decision-making logic. We find support for all three propositions, indicating the Court's recent turn has real effects on its supporters, its legitimacy, and, potentially, its future behavior, too.

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Given the Roberts Court's propensity for producing opinions that are pro-business (Tribe and Matz 2014), anti-abortion (Ziegler 2023), anti-affirmative action (Coyle 2013), and pro-gun (Winkler 2011), journalists and the public typically identify it as conservative (Kaplan 2018). Viewed in this light, contemporary decisions favoring Christianity appear to simply follow this conservative path (Biskupic 2023). More recently, however, journalists and scholars suggested the Court was doing more than entrenching conservative religious doctrine (Greenhouse 2021); they charged the Court with supporting and enabling Christian nationalism, a political movement seeking "a fusion of American civic life with a particular type of Christian identity and culture" favoring White supremacy, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and conservative politics (Whitehead and Perry 2020, xix). They defended their claims with seemingly endless stories explaining the Court's shift, from the advent of the Court's religiously-conservative majority and its subsequent cascade of pro-Christian decisions (Greenhouse 2021), to the elimination of abortion rights (Ziegler 2023), to reports that Justice Samuel Alito flew flags associated with Christian nationalism outside of his home (Dias and Lerer 2024). Journalists and scholars alike declared the Court was chasing religious and ideological preferences at the expense of the rule of law, and they predicted the Court's reputation would suffer as a result. Did people believe the Court was enabling and empowering Christian nationalism? And if yes, were its actions also affecting the way people thought about both the Court and religion's proper role in American government?

We believe the answer to the first question is yes, and we suspect the Court's actions lead to more acceptance than outrage. The Constitution tasks the Supreme Court with protecting individual rights, and it consequently has an outsized say over religion's constitutional place in the public sphere (Greenhouse 2021). Because people typically accept the Court's decisions whether they like them or not (Ura 2014), it also has an outsized *influence* over people's perceptions of religion's place in American public life (Stewart 2019). Thus, whether purposeful or not, the justices' decisions favoring Christianity in explicitly religious cases – allowing prayer on school grounds, religious symbols in public spaces, and govern-

ment funding for religious educations – and implicitly religious cases – involving abortion and anti-discrimination laws – should increase popular acceptance of the idea that religion has a prominent place in American life, as should off-bench activities that underscore the justices' religious affiliations. For Christian nationalists, the justices' actions lead to policy wins and popular validation of its core tenants (Corbin 2020), and we suspect Christian nationalists' support for the Court and its processes grows when the Court looks favorably on its causes. But the Court's legitimating power can also go a long way toward advancing the movement's ideals among the masses (Johnson and Martin 1998), especially when so many people are willing to tolerate some of its core ideas (Whitehead, Perry and Baker 2018). We thus also expect the justices' decisions and actions lead to broader public acceptance of religious reasoning, which can have dire consequences for a society long built around the goals of pluralism and equality.

To test these hypotheses, we take a two-pronged approach to examining the relationship between Christian nationalism and public attitudes toward the Supreme Court. First, we examine how support for Christian nationalism translates to support for Supreme Court decisions that favor the movement's core tenants. We suspect Americans harboring Christian nationalist attitudes will be more supportive of Court decisions that affect religious life, and they will be more accepting of the justices using religious logic to reach those decisions. Using data from two surveys covering five thousand participants, we find that Christian nationalism is positively related to support for *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (2022) overturning *Roe v. Wade* (1973). This effect outpaces those of standard religious indicators, and only ideology and ex ante support for abortion rival its size. We also find that Christian nationalism has an outsized effect on support for the use of political and religious logic in Court cases. Taken together, these results confirm that a Court that supports Christian nationalist goals gains Christian nationalists' support.

In the second part of our study, we examine public response to the concern the Court is sympathetic to Christian nationalism. Journalists and Court watchers believe the

public will respond poorly to knowledge the Court aligns itself with Christian logic and outcomes, but we suspect the Court's unique ability to legitimize unpopular decisions, known as legitimation theory (see Caldeira 1991; Johnson and Martin 1998; Ura 2014), extends to the reasoning the justices use to reach those decisions. To test this theory, we use an original survey experiment built around the *New York Times* report on Justice Alito's Christian nationalist flag to examine how adherence to Christian nationalism influences support for different judicial decision-making factors (Kantor, Toler and Tate 2024). Our results suggest that exposure to a story about Alito's display increases popular support for the Court using religious considerations in its opinion, though it has no impact on support for using legalistic factors. Christian nationalism conditions this effect; participants with low adherence to Christian nationalism who read about the flag were significantly more likely to support the Court's use of non-legal factors in its decision-making process than were participants in the control group. We thus conclude the Court can legitimize the use of religious logic in its decisions, despite it being unpopular and running counter to the Court's legal mandate.

These results are important for our understanding how institutions build and maintain their legitimacy. The Supreme Court has always relied on popular goodwill for its authority to rule (Caldeira and Gibson 1992), and that goodwill stems at least partially from popular belief that the Court treats people fairly under the law (Bartels and Johnston 2013). When the justices' decisions align with Christian nationalists' goals, however, they necessarily issue decisions that favor one group over another and thus abrogate their commitment to fairness (Corbin 2020; Zilis 2021). If they deploy religious logic to reach those decisions, they also destroy popular belief in their adherence to the rule of law (e.g., Baird 2001; Farganis 2012). Consequently, appearing to support Christian nationalism should negatively affect the Court's legitimacy. We do not find that to be true. Instead, our results indicate support for religious logic increases when people see the Court connected to Christian nationalism. This finding suggests the justices can legitimate the use of religious logic and maintain their stores of support, and thus might have external incentives to keep ruling the way they are.

With that said, our findings also provide a cautionary tale for appearing to side *too* closely with Christian nationalism. We find the Court currently draws significant support from Christian nationalists, who tend to be more supportive of political violence (Armaly, Buckley and Enders 2022), and the use of violence against fellow citizens (Perry, Whitehead and Davis 2019). The Court's support could embolden Christian nationalists to visibly abuse the people who lost at the Court, including non-Christians, women, racial and ethnic minorities, and immigrants (Corbin 2020), which few Americans would support in practice. Beyond that, the perception the justices sympathize with Christian nationalism is problematic in itself, as it suggests the justices believe in a vision of America that conflicts with the public's. Such connections can affect the seriousness with which the public takes the Court and its work. While Americans might learn to support the use of religious logic in Supreme Court opinions, they might be less willing to support a broader dismantling of American ideals or the institution leading them there.

Christian Nationalism and the Supreme Court

Dating back to at least the 1970s, when Phyllis Schlafly brought together conservatives and religious groups to stall the Equal Rights Amendment (Spruill 2017), and the nascent Moral Majority convinced the Republican party to outwardly oppose abortion (Stewart 2019), Christian-aligned groups have amassed the political power to push for policies that prioritize and defer to Christianity (Greenburg 2007). While the media refer to these groups as a unified "Religious Right," they are actually a loose coalition of ideologies using similar arguments to achieve different endgames. Some are White evangelicals, who want to turn America into a Christian theocracy governed by the Bible (Whitehead and Perry 2019). Others are Christian nationalists, who seek a return to the "Christian" America they believe existed at the founding, which they recognize as nativistic, patriarchal, heteronormative, and White (Whitehead, Perry and Baker 2018). Both groups seek to replace the secular and pluralistic America with their version of a more "traditional" society (Green 2015), and their

members often overlap, but their different approaches and political goals distinguish them (Whitehead and Perry 2020). Importantly, Christian nationalism's more exclusive vision of America and its focus on "divine militarism" makes it uniquely dangerous to the American experiment (Corbin 2020), as its adherents will physically fight to implement their preferred system of government and its associated hierarchies (Armaly, Buckley and Enders 2022).

Christian nationalism is a "unique and independent ideology" that focuses on "a symbolic defense of the United States' perceived Christian heritage" (Whitehead, Perry and Baker 2018, 147). It is distinct from other dimensions of religiosity, such as attending religious services or prioritizing religion, because it blends Christianity and American history (Stewart 2019); for example, Christian nationalists believe God inspired the Constitution and other founding documents, and thus revere it in ways theocrats do not (Whitehead and Perry 2020). Christian nationalists also adhere to a contemporary apocalyptic perspective regarding perceived threats to America's White Christian tradition, including rapid changes in demographics, the law, and liberal policies (Gorski 2019). Its followers seek a social hierarchy that favors White American Christian men and relegates others to the subservient positions their groups held at the founding, and they advocate using violence to achieve that goal (Corbin 2020). Given these tenants, Christian nationalism distinctly combines religious, racial, gendered, and political identities into a single ideology that is more political than religious. While research indicates Christian nationalists make up a small portion of the American population, it also suggests Christian nationalist rhetoric can unite groups around shared goals (Whitehead, Perry and Baker 2018), which allows the ideology to thrive.

When fighting for their vision of America, adherents of Christian nationalism often find themselves facing the Supreme Court, because the Court's mandate to protect individual rights uniquely enables it to help or hinder their goals (Whitehead and Perry 2020). When the Warren Court removed religion from classrooms and public spaces, and the Burger Court sanctioned abortion and the IRS's ability to revoke religious groups' tax-exempt statuses (Stewart 2019), the Court sent the message that Christianity did not control American

society, and its ability to legitimize societal change through its decisions ensured the public upheld that position (Ura 2014). In response, Christian groups broadly denounced the Court and vowed to align it with their goals through legal fights and membership changes; they knew if the Court aligned with them, *their* views would become the abiding ones (Bennett 2017; Calmes 2021). Christian nationalists also lambasted the Court for implicitly religious rulings that empowered women, racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, and LGBTQ individuals (Whitehead and Perry 2020), and they too sought to supplant the Court's pluralistic approach with their own (Corbin 2020). Their message was clear: if the Court came over to their side, it would legitimize their views in ways voting never could.

The Court's Publicly Religious Profile

Over the course of three decades, the Court's decisions directly played into Christian nationalists' hands by issuing opinions that aligned with their explicitly religious goals. The Rehnquist Court moved slowly but surely, allowing religious groups to use public spaces for their meetings in *Lamb's Chapel v. Center Moriches Union Free School District* (1993), endorsing states' provisions of publicly-funded vouchers for private religious education in *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* (2002), and blessing legalistic public displays of the Ten Commandments in *Van Orden v. Perry* (2005) (Toobin 2008). But they also put up guardrails, notably forbidding public prayer at football games in *Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe* (2000) and obviously religious public displays in *McCreary County v. ACLU of Kentucky* (2005) (Greenburg 2007). The Roberts Court quickly and systemically removed those guardrails (Greenhouse 2021), allowing Christian prayers at town assembly meetings in *Town of Greece v. Galloway* (2014); publicly-funded religious displays in *American Legion v. American Humanist Association* (2019); and, in a decision that overturned fifty years of protections against public displays of religion, public prayer on football fields in *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District* (2022) (Biskupic 2023).

The Roberts Court also issued a litany of implicitly religious decisions that spoke to

other tenants of Christian nationalism. For example, the Court's decision to overturn abortion rights in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (2022) ended a decades-long moral campaign to eliminate the practice (Ziegler 2023). Religious groups like the Alliance Defending Freedom then started targeting women's access to birth control (Rinkunaus 2025), which Christian nationalists praised as a step toward reinstating traditional family structures (Stewart 2022). Similarly, the Court ruled in *303 Creative LLC v. Elenis* (2023) that a Colorado Christian website designer did not have to make wedding websites for LGBTQ individuals, a move that drew Christian nationalist praise for placing religion over civil rights (Lavietes and Yurcaba 2023).

We would typically expect the masses are relatively unaware of the Court's actions and popular perceptions of the Court remain untouched by its daily work (e.g., Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Gibson and Caldeira 2009; Zaller 1992). But public discourse lead us to believe the public cannot help but pay attention to these particular rulings. The media moved quickly to document the Court's decisions and the changes they brought. Supreme Court commentator Kate Shaw, for example, observed that the Court favored religious plaintiffs in *literally every* major religion case heard after Justice Amy Coney Barrett joined the bench (Shaw 2023). Journalists wrung their hands over the Court "[selling] its soul to the Christian right" (Michaelson 2023). Law professors similarly voiced concerns about the shift toward government-sanctioned Christianity (Baumgardner 2021; Feldman 2022; Russo and Thro 2023). Other interested parties raised concern the Court was promoting a particular brand of White Christian nationalism, with the founder of the non-partisan Public Religion Research Institute, arguing, "What we're seeing is a desperate power grab as the sun is setting on white Christian America. In the courts, instead of moving slowly and systematically, it's a lurch" (Smith 2022).

Simultaneously, the media began dissecting the justices' personal religious beliefs' effects on their decision-making processes. Between 2017 and 2020, the Court gained three conservative justices whose records promised increased public religiosity and an end to abor-

tion rights (Calmes 2021). Conversations about these justices focused on their religious affiliations in ways that had not been relevant in decades (Badas and Schmidt 2024),[1] with a specific focus on how Justices Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett's public dedication to Catholicism would affect their decisions (Greenhouse 2021). News reports on sitting justices also addressed religiosity, from one on Justice Clarence Thomas's wife, Ginni, supporting Christian interest groups that approached the Court (Mayer 2022), to the front-page story that Justice Samuel Alito flew a Christian nationalist flag outside his summer home in New Jersey (Kantor, Toler and Tate 2024). Some Christian groups also bragged they prayed with the very justices who cited their amicus brief when overturning *Roe v. Wade* (Voght and Dickinson 2022). These stories implied Christians had influence if they wanted it.

Data suggest the broader public has caught on to the Court's religious turn. The Pew Research Center finds the share of Americans who think the Court is "friendly" to religion about doubled between 2019-2022, from 18% to 35%. Similarly, 44% of participants believe the justices rely on their religious beliefs "too much," but this value is lower among religious "winners," like Protestants (29%) and evangelicals (15%).[2] A separate Pew study indicates those who are religious have a more favorable opinion of the Court, with favorability among Christians at 7% higher than all adults and among evangelicals at 10% higher.[3] These results are striking in their suggestion that people know about the Court's work and express concern the justices are diverting from legal principles to make decisions.

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[1]Presidents ensured certain religions were on the bench in the early part of the twentieth century, and the first few non-Protestant nominees drew concern over their ability to separate their religion from their work (Nemacheck 2007). Presidents switched their focus to racial and gender diversity when those factors became electorally important in the 1970s (King, Schoenherr and Ostrander 2025), and a justice's religion received little attention until the late 2010s.

[2]https://tinyurl.com/3jkx2a6v

[3]https://tinyurl.com/43buzmwn

Christian Nationalism and Support for the Judiciary

Popular discourse regarding the Court's Christian nationalist sympathies should, at a minimum, draw support from religiously-minded individuals pleased by the decisions. Research by Badas and Schmidt (2024) suggests individuals who believe the justices share their religious leanings are more supportive of the judiciary. Their findings indicate *perceptions* of religious representation, not actual representation, drive support for the institution; they find evangelicals believe the Court represents their interests despite the Court lacking Evangelical members at the time of their experiment. Thus, people may feel substantively represented by the Court simply because they believe the justices share their religious affiliations. But having information about the Court's approach to religious issues should also increase the likelihood that religious people support the Court. Work on religiously extreme sentiment shows that elite rhetoric and cues effectively mobilize followers (Armaly, Buckley and Enders 2022; Perry 2023, see also Rahko and Craig 2024), and any coverage of the justices' religious leanings or the Court's decisions could be considered elite cues supportive of Christian nationalism, whether the justices intended for that or not. Consequently, both subjective and objective contexts should lead anyone who wants more religion in the public sphere to support the Court when it releases explicitly religious decisions.

The Court's implicitly religious decisions in areas like abortion and discrimination should be particularly important for drawing Christian nationalist support. Attitudes about the Court are a function of group attachments and beliefs about the Court's treatment of different groups (Zilis 2018, 2021). As Davis (2018) suggests, religion "divides humanity into tribal groups of members and outsiders," leading "many Americans [to] utilize religious beliefs as a, if not the, key factor in the construction of their worldview" (300). Christian nationalism's explicit goal is preferential treatment of their group (Broeren and Djupe 2024), and its adherents "feel threatened by those outside their group, thus creating their own victimhood" (45). Indeed, a growing movement argues contemporary society is a "neg-

ative world" for Christians, and that "Being a Christian...is a social negative" (Graham and Hordinski 2025). As Armaly and Enders (2021) argue, people who feel victimized support leaders and institutions they believe can "fix" their status (see also Armaly, Buckley and Enders 2022; Iyengar 1989); consequently, Christian nationalists seek to empower those who treat their issues or make their negative world more positive. When the Supreme Court appears to support explicitly religious outcomes *and* reject claims made by the groups threatening their goals, Christian nationalists should support the Court's decisions in implicitly religious areas in ways that others, even religious people, might not.

Christian Nationalism and Court Legitimation

With that said, we believe the Court's apparent embrace of religion extends beyond opinion support to the legitimation of the mechanisms the Court uses to reach those opinions. Decades of scholarship indicates the public wants judges to justify their decisions using a strict set of "fair" standards (see Bartels and Johnston 2013; Wells 2007). The public believes "legalist" interpretations, like reliance on text and precedent, are value free (Chemerinsky 2002; Rivero and Stone 2023); alternatively, people consider factors like personal beliefs and ideology less legitimate, and view religious or moral logic as fully illegitimate (Farganis 2012). When it comes to Christian nationalism, we suspect its adherents also support the use of text and precedent in Supreme Court decisions—after all, they believe the Court can uniquely legitimize their cause and they want the Court do so (Stewart 2019). But Christian nationalism also depends on logic stemming from religious sources, and its adherents are willing to accept political and religious reasoning that validates their preferred outcomes (Whitehead, Perry and Baker 2018). Thus, we surmise Christian nationalists will also support the Court's use of religious and extralegal logic in opinions that favor Christian nationalist goals.

We suspect, however, that the Court's unique ability to force mass acceptance of its decisions may ease some of these concerns and, in fact, draw approval for them. While mass policy attitudes are typically a top-down affair (Zaller 1992), the judiciary is uniquely

situated to validate unpopular policies (Johnson and Martin 1998). The judiciary can confer legitimacy onto policies it prefers, because "the Supreme Court's close association with the Constitution and powerful symbols of institutional legitimacy will pull Americans' attitudes toward positions adopted by the Court" (Ura 2014, 110).[4] That is, the Court's rulings can change "people from segregationists to integrationists, from pro-lifers to pro-choicers" (Caldeira 1991, 305). Importantly, this legitimation should go beyond mere legal approval of a decision, as research suggests decisions by the Supreme Court actively mold public perceptions of an issue and confer normative approval on certain policies that may promote greater social acceptance of the issue at hand, even in the face of initial backlash (see, e.g., Hoekstra 2000; Tankard and Paluck 2017). Put differently, the Court's rulings and the justices' actions serve as a powerful endorsement for ideas. Their decisions signal that the law—and, thereby, social consensus—supports these decisions.[5]

Because the theory of legitimation relates to individuals with whom policies are *un*popular, research suggests individuals low in Christian nationalism should eventually accept the Court's turn toward religiosity. While those individuals may not approve of the Court favoring public prayer and funding for playgrounds in religious schools, or eliminating abortion rights, or overturning anti-discrimination laws for the sake of religious freedom, they should eventually *accept* them. Importantly, we believe this legitimizing effect will carry over to the logic the justices use to reach those decisions. While the public clearly prefers the justices defend their decisions using the law and not politics or religion (Farganis 2012), the justices' favoring of religious issues could signal that religious logic is another valid

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[4]Some studies suggest the Court's decisions can induce negative popular reactions (Allen and Haider-Markel 2006; Rosenberg 2008; Stoutenborough, Haider-Markel and Allen 2006), but this is more due to ex ante public opinion than the Court's involvement (see Brickman and Peterson 2006). Johnson and Martin (1998) suggest a landmark Court ruling permanently shifts public opinion on an issue and Ura (2014) shows that long-term legitimation often follows short-term backlash, while other work indicates attitude strength and information about the Court's actions underlie legitimation, too (Hoekstra 2000; Mondak 1994).

[5]Of course, some universally unsupported decisions, such as *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (2022), may have the opposite effect, see Clark et al. (2024); Gibson (2024*a,b*).

legal approach.[6] If the justices, enshrined in the trapping of the institution and respected for being a part of it, are comfortable with religion having a place in the public sphere, then religious logic must necessarily be just another valid legal approach. Just as with policies, the close association between the Court, the Constitution, and other symbols of legitimacy should legitimate the Court's logical processes, too.

Observational Studies: Christian Nationalism and the Court

We begin our analysis by first addressing the relationship between Christian nationalism and attitudes toward the Court. To do this, we utilize two sources of observational data. The first is the 2023 Christian Nationalism Survey, jointly collected by the Public Religion Research Institution and the Brookings Institution (N = ~4,500),[7] which we use to understand Christian nationalist response to the Court's decisions. Our second data source is an original survey conducted via Cint Theorem (previously Lucid Theorem) in August 2024 (N = 1,009), which we use to study Christian nationalists' support for different mechanisms of legal interpretation. We consider each data source and question in turn.

Christian Nationalism and Support for Dobbs

As we suggested earlier, we suspect Christians will broadly support the Court's explicitly religious decisions, but adherents of Christian nationalism will be distinctly supportive of the Supreme Court's implicitly religious decisions. To examine this supposition, we use data from the 2023 Christian Nationalism Survey to the relationship between adherence to Christian nationalism and support for overturning *Roe v. Wade* (1973), the Supreme Court decision that determined abortion was an individual right.[8] The Court overturned *Roe* in

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[6]The justices make this connection with some regularity. For example, the Court's building has a marble frieze of notable lawgivers that includes Moses holding the Ten Commandments, and the justices say his presence has legal, not religious, significance (Kaplan 2018).

[7]https://tinyurl.com/yckpuu6e

[8]We provide a list of all questions used for this analysis in the supplemental appendix.

Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization (2022), so we equate support for overturning *Roe* with support for *Dobbs*. Understanding this, we hypothesize:

> CN-Dobbs Support Hypothesis: Individuals high in Christian nationalism will be more supportive of the Supreme Court deciding to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, even when accounting for other measures of religious devotion.

The Christian Nationalism Survey asks about the Supreme Court's 2022 decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. Participants were asked, using a 4-point scale running from "strongly oppose" to "strongly favor," how much they favor or oppose "The Supreme Court overturning Roe versus Wade, the 1973 Supreme Court decision that affirmed a constitutional right to abortion." We use these responses for our dependent variable, coding it such that higher values indicate support for overturning *Roe v. Wade*, and we expect it to have a positive relationship with Christian nationalism. The language of the survey item is important because it explicitly references the Court and does not discuss abortion on its own; instead, it combines attitudes about abortion—specifically, ex ante support for its legality—with attitudes about the Supreme Court, allowing us to draw inferences about attitudes regarding the institution, which is key for understanding Christian nationalism separately from religious preferences.

Following Whitehead, Perry and Baker (2018), we measure adherence to Christian nationalism using a series of eight well-validated questions (e.g. Armaly, Buckley and Enders 2022; Perry, Whitehead and Grubbs 2024; Saiya and Manchanda 2024).[9] Using a four-point scale ranging from "completely disagree" to "completely agree," participants rated how much they agree with statements such as "U.S. laws should be based on Christian values," and "God has called Christians to exercise dominion over all areas of American society." These items form a reliable and unidimensional scale, so we utilize a summated rating scale of the eight items.[10]

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[9]Following Davis (2023), we checked our results using a two-item Christian nationalism scale. As we show in Table A4 in the supplemental appendix, our results remain substantively the same. For more discussion of measurement differences, see Djupe, Lewis and Sokhey (2023).

[10]The full list of these items, summary statistics, and psychometric properties appear in Table A1 in the supplemental appendix.

Alongside our key independent variable of adherence to Christian nationalism, we control for several other important factors in our models. First, because Christian nationalism is *not* a measure of one's adherence to Christianity, we account for participants' religiosity. To do this, we employ items that ask about the importance of religion in one's life. Using a four-point scale from "not important" to "the most important," participants indicated the role religion plays in their lives. Relatedly, we use a six-point scale ranging from "never" to "more than once a week" to identify how often, in the previous year, participants attended religious services (excluding weddings or funerals), or volunteered for a religious organization.

We also control for ex ante support for the legality of abortion. Participants answered this question using a 4-point scale ranging from "illegal in all cases" to "legal in all cases." We considered a host of political variables as well, including favorability ratings for Joe Biden and Donald Trump, partisanship, ideology, and the strength of those predispositions. We also include demographic controls for education, gender, income, age, and race.[11]

Finally, existing scholarship on religion and Court attitudes specifically considers evangelicalism (e.g., Badas and Schmidt 2024). While scholars suggest those seeking to understand Christian nationalism should not solely focus on evangelicals (Gorski and Perry 2022; Whitehead and Perry 2020), we control for it to ensure adherence to Christian nationalism is not capturing something exclusively connected to evangelical participants.[12]

Empirical Results

To examine the relationship between adherence to Christian nationalism and support for the Supreme Court overturning *Roe v. Wade* in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health*

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[11]See Table A2 in the supplemental appendix for all participant demographics.

[12]We also include fixed effects for self-identified religion because the propensity to support Christian nationalism may vary across religious groups. We use PRRI's categorization, which asks participants to identify as Catholic, Protestant, other religion, or no religion. Given our focus is on a particular ideological variant of Christianity, the lack of granularity for non-Christian religions is not a concern. For the sake of completeness, we also examined interactive effects between Christian nationalism and ideology, as well as between Christian nationalism and evangelical identity. The results suggest these factors are significant but behave the way we expect – as adherence to Christian nationalism grows, both ideology and evangelical identity matter less as independent factors. See Table A3 in the supplemental appendix for these results.

Organization, we utilize ordinary least squares regression. Because we want to compare the magnitudes of different factors, we rescaled our main (e.g., non demographic control) variables to range from 0 to 1 before conducting the analysis. We provide the results of this analysis in Table 1. Positive coefficients are related to support for *Dobbs*, while negative values are related to opposition to the decision.

	Coefficient (Std. Error)
Christian Nationalism	0.114*
	(0.042)
Religious Importance	0.038
	(0.027)
Service Attendance	0.073
	(0.041)
Legal Abortion Support	−0.277*
	(0.032)
Biden Favorability	−0.093*
	(0.031)
Trump Favorability	0.120*
	(0.031)
Self-identified Ideology	0.235*
	(0.043)
Partisan Identification	0.063
	(0.036)
Ideological Strength	0.072*
	(0.022)
Partisan Strength	−0.005
	(0.023)
Evangelical	0.006
	(0.018)
Education	0.003
	(0.007)
Female	−0.040*
	(0.013)
Income	0.001
	(0.005)
Age	0.000
	(0.000)
Black, Non-Hispanic	0.070*
	(0.026)
Other, Non-Hispanic	0.057
	(0.042)
Hispanic	0.024
	(0.020)
Multiracial, Non-Hispanic	0.075
	(0.042)
Constant	0.738*
	(0.055)
Observations	4,385

*$p<0.05$, two-tailed test.

Table 1: Coefficients estimates for regression of support for *Dobbs* decision on adherence to Christian nationalism. Survey weights used in estimation.

As Table 1 shows, adherence to Christian nationalism has a positive and significant effect on support for *Dobbs*.[13] Importantly, we find the effect of adherence to Christian nationalism on support for the *Dobbs* ruling (0.11) is greater than the effects of religious attendance (0.07) and self-assessed religious importance (0.04) and the only significant predictor of support among the three. This is consistent with our theory that Christian nationalism has a unique influence on support for decisions the Supreme Court makes.

To better illustrate Christian nationalism's impact, Figure 1 compares support for *Dobbs* across four different factors that could affect support for the decision: Christian nationalism (top left), identification as an evangelical Christian (top right), importance of religion in one's life (bottom left), and religious service attendance in the last year (bottom right). Starting first with Christian nationalism, moving from low to high levels of adherence to the ideology increases support for *Dobbs* by 32.5%. Comparatively, moving from low to high belief in the importance of religion only increases support by 10.1%, and moving from low to high religious service attendance increases support by 20.1%. Additionally, we find that identifying as an evangelical Christian does not significantly affect support for *Dobbs*, a finding that further emphasizes Christian nationalism is not simply a stand-in for evangelicalism.[14] Taken together, we find support for our hypothesis that individuals high in Christian nationalism will be more supportive of the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs*, even when accounting for other aspects of religiosity and evangelicalism. And, by using *Dobbs*—an implicitly religious case—as opposed to explicitly religious cases (e.g., school prayer), we demonstrate the unique role Christian nationalism plays in support for Court decisions.

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[13]All discussion of significance or significant differences are with respect to a two-tailed test where $p < 0.05$.

[14]See Table A5 in the supplemental appendix for analysis regarding multicollinearity concerns.
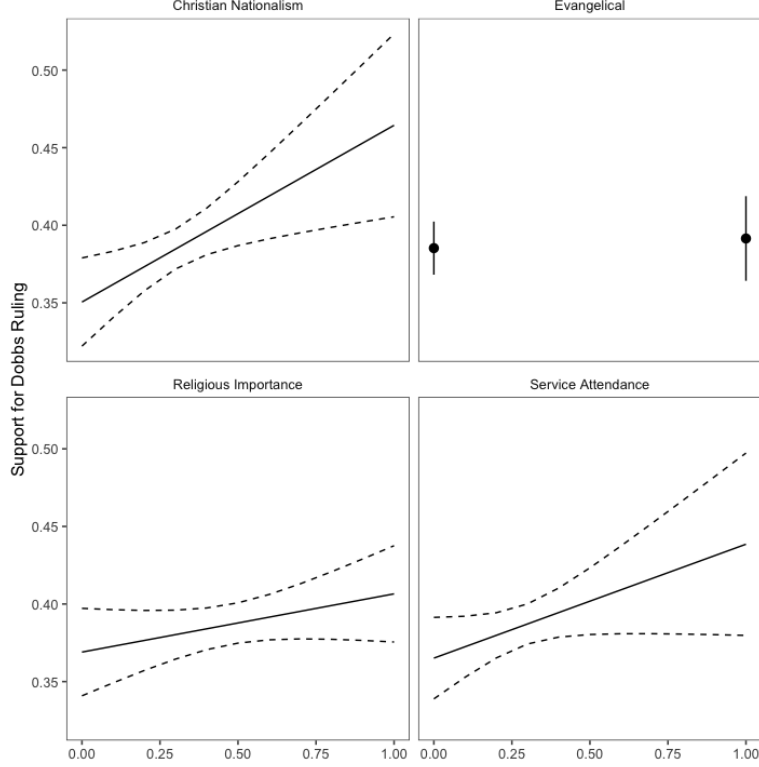
Figure 1: Model-based prediction of effect of each religious variable of interest on support for *Dobbs*, with 95-percent confidence intervals. Predictions from Table 1 estimates.

Christian Nationalism and Support for Judicial Decision Making Factors

Having demonstrated that adherence to Christian nationalism affects support for overturning *Roe v. Wade*, we next ask if adherence to Christian nationalism also impacts support for the Court's approach to the law. Specifically, we ask if Christian nationalists are more likely to support the Court's use of different decision-making factors – from broadly-accepted legal factors, to less valid political factors, to unacceptable religious factors. We expect they do. To address this question, we utilize data from an original experiment of 1,009 participants conducted via Cint Theorem in August 2024.[15] Cint Theorem offers quota-based nationally representative samples based on age, sex, race and ethnicity, and

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[15]We remove "speeders" from our analysis. We define speeding as spending less than six minutes on a survey that was designed to—and, for the average participant, did—take 15 minutes. We acknowledge this distinction is arbitrary, but note that it omits only 127 of 1,136 possible participants. Additionally, following Read, Wolters and Berinsky (2022), we control for the time it took a participant to complete the survey.

educational attainment.[16] We return to these data later in this paper when experimentally testing the theory of legitimation.[17]

For this part of our analysis, we asked participants, "Do you agree with Supreme Court justices using the following factors to decide cases?" We listed eight different factors with which participants could agree or disagree using five-point, Likert-type scales.[18] Figure 2 summarizes each of these factors by showing mean participant support for them. Notably, participant responses break down into two statistically-distinct categories. We see that, in accordance with past work (Rivero and Stone 2023), participants are supportive of the Court using apolitical and legalistic tools to make decisions, including scientific evidence, laws passed by Congress, and Supreme Court precedent. Also consistent with past research, participants are less supportive of using religious and personal considerations, interest group and politician opinions, and partisan preferences (Farganis 2012).

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[16]For more information on sample characteristics, see Table A6 in the supplemental appendix. We also compare our sample to the most recent U.S. Census. Cint Theorem, though not a probability sample, tends to capture attitudes of the U.S. population (Coppock and McClellan 2019). To further ensure the quality of our data, we follow advice of Berinsky, Margolis and Sances (2014) and use both Theorem's techniques as well as our own. Theorem utilizes internal methods (such as reCAPTCHA) to screen for inattentive participants. We required participants to pass several attention checks. Individuals who failed the first attention check were immediately removed from the survey and replaced with a demographically similar participant.

[17]Our survey contained multiple experimental treatments. Because it was an "omnibus" survey, several of these treatments were intended for separate projects. In expectation and empirically, these treatments are unrelated to the dependent variables of interest in this paper. For these models, we control for exposure to treatment category and exclude the participants who were exposed to the Christian nationalist treatment; we consider those participants separately in the next section of the paper.

[18]We provide a list of all questions used for this analysis in the supplemental appendix.
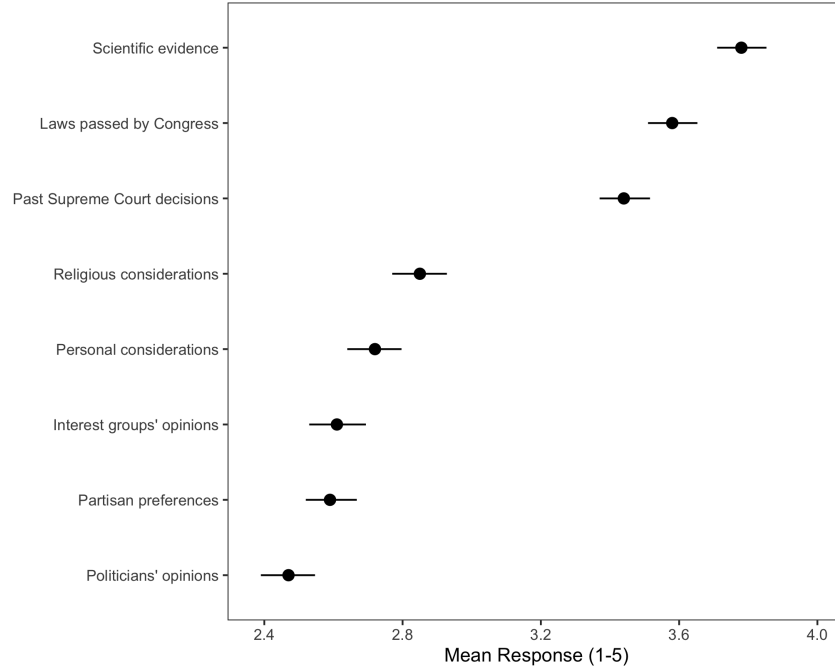
Figure 2: Mean response of five-point, strongly disagree–strongly agree scale to questions about decision making factors used by Supreme Court justices. Horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

To create our dependent variables for this analysis, we subject these eight items to factor analysis to determine if individuals structure their attitudes regarding the decision-making factors Supreme Court justices use.[19] Consistent with the response patterns in Figure 2, we find these items sort into two factors, which we call "political" and "expertise." The "political" factor includes explicitly political decision-making items, such as opinions from elected officials and interest groups, religious and personal considerations, and partisan preferences. The "expertise" factor contains items such as past Supreme Court precedent,

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[19]The results of this factor analysis appear in Table A7. Part A of Table A7 demonstrates that a two-factor solution fits these data well, which is consistent with the response patterns in Figure 2. The eigenvalues for the first and second factor are both greater than 1.0, and each explains a meaningful proportion of variance. Additionally, implementing Horn's parallel analysis—a statistical technique useful in determining the appropriate number of factors to retain—indicates the two-factor solution is appropriate.

laws written by Congress, and scientific evidence. We use these predicted factor scores as dependent variables in our subsequent analyses. Additionally, because we are specifically interested in support for religious factors, we also analyze the religious considerations item as its own dependent variable. With these variables in hand, we hypothesize the following:

Expertise Factor Hypothesis: Individuals higher in adherence to Christian nationalism will be no more or less supportive of the use of expertise factors in judicial decision making.

Political Factor Hypothesis: Individuals higher in adherence to Christian nationalism will be more supportive of the use of political factors in judicial decision making.

Religious Factor Hypothesis: Individuals higher in adherence to Christian nationalism will be more supportive of the specific use of religious factors in judicial decision making.

The independent variables we use for this analysis are similar to those we employed in our previous analysis. To measure adherence to Christian nationalism, we utilize a summated rating scale of six questions participants answered using an odd-point scale with a neutral, "neither agree nor disagree" midpoint.[20] We also control for political predispositions, several Court-centric attitudes (perceived ideological distance from the Court, knowledge of the judiciary, perceived politicization, diffuse support), religiosity, and sociodemographic factors. Finally, we include a control variable that records exposure to other experimental treatments included on the survey but not utilized in this paper.

Empirical Results

To test our hypotheses regarding decision making factors, we separately regress each dependent variable onto adherence to Christian nationalism and the host of control variables

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[20]Results remain substantively the same if we utilize the two-item Christian nationalism measure, see Table A9 in the supplemental appendix.

described above. Once again, we rescaled our main (e.g., non demographic control) variables to range from 0 to 1 to allow us to compare magnitudes. Full model estimates appear in Table 2. To ease interpretation we display model-based predictions of the relationship between adherence to Christian nationalism and each of our dependent variables in Figure 3.

Table 2: Christian Nationalism and Support for Judicial Decision Making Models

	Dependent variable:		
	Religious	Political	Expertise
Christian Nationalism	0.436*	0.181*	0.043
	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Partisanship	−0.006	0.002	−0.067*
	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.03)
Ideology	0.082	−0.030	0.040
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Partisan Strength	−0.002	0.011	0.014
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Ideological Strength	0.028	0.001	0.047*
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)
SCOTUS Ideological Disagreement	−0.081	−0.085*	−0.033
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Knowledge	−0.063	−0.172*	0.150*
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.03)
Politicization	−0.129*	−0.120*	−0.067*
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Legitimacy	0.119*	0.169*	0.022
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Religiosity	0.107*	0.046	−0.017
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Age	0.042	−0.072	0.024
	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Education	−0.090*	−0.075*	0.016
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Female	0.037	−0.007	−0.029
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Duration	0.000	0.000	0.000*
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Constant	0.186*	0.507*	0.596*
	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.00)
Racial Category	✓	✓	✓
Other Treatment Controls	✓	✓	✓
Observations	729	727	727

*p<0.05 on two-tailed test. Full model estimates in Table A8.

As Figure 3 shows, we find support for all three hypotheses. Looking first to the top left side of the figure, we see that individuals with high adherence to Christian nationalism are as supportive of the justices relying on expertise as anyone else. Notably, the top right side of Figure 3 suggests Christian nationalists are also significantly more willing to accept
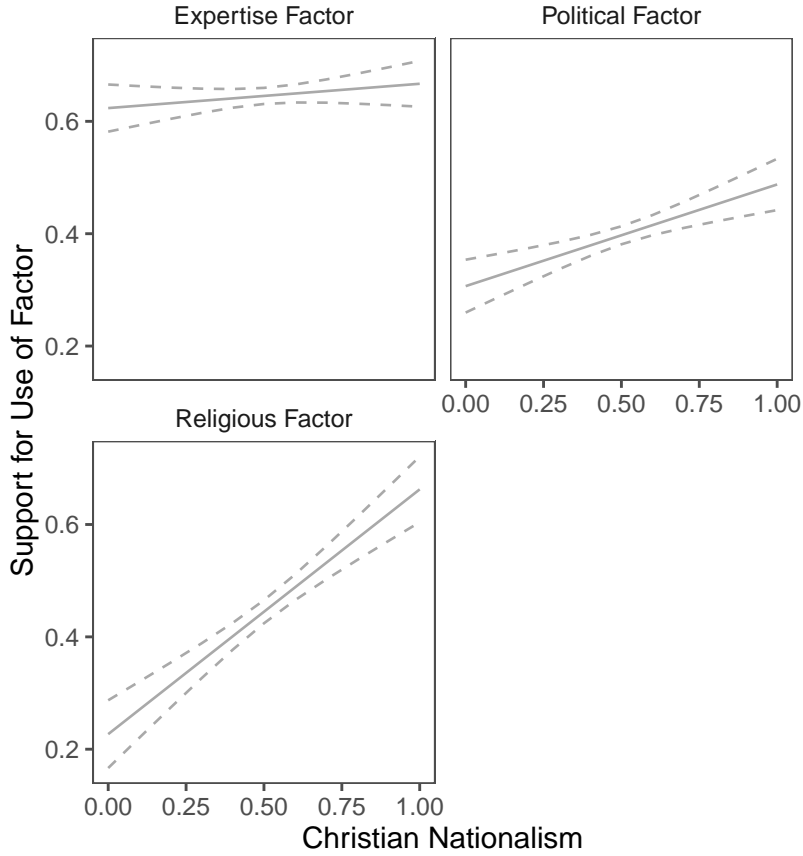
Figure 3: Predicted support for use of factor in judicial decision making, by adherence to Christian nationalism. Full estimates are in Table 2.

the Court's use of political factors,[21] and the bottom left of the figure shows they are also more willing to accept the use of religious factors in the judicial decision-making process. Taken together, these results indicate that Christian nationalists want the Court to employ the types of logic they believe will lead to instrumental gain for their group and its cause, even if people typically view that type of logic as illegitimate.

The size of the effect across decision-making factors is worthy of note. First, as we expected, support for judicial dependence on expertise is high, and high levels of adherence to Christian nationalism do not lead to significant increases in support for it. But, across the range of adherence to Christian nationalism, we see a significant 59% increase in support

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[21]We also estimated the partisan factor with the religious factor excluded, as we show in Table A10 in the supplemental appendix. The effect is substantively similar and model predictions are correlated at 0.99.

for the use of political factors. And, most importantly, there is a *whopping* 192% increase in support for the use of religious factors as adherence to Christian nationalism increases. Importantly for the religious factor, the predicted value surpasses 0.5, or the neutral midpoint, among those high in Christian nationalism. Thus, it is not simply that there is an *increase* in support. Rather, Christian nationalists are *supportive* of religious decision making logic in Court decisions. Our results demonstrate the significant role that Christian nationalism plays in support of the Court using religious rationale in its decisions. While the mass public views the Court with skepticism after religious-adjacent cases (e.g., Gibson 2024*a*), our findings show the potential for future support of increased religious logic with the growth of the Christian nationalist movement.

Experimental Study: Legitimating Christian Nationalism

Having demonstrated that extant levels of Christian nationalism relate to support for the actions of the Court, particularly those that are implicitly religious, we next ask whether a justice's seemingly pro-Christian nationalist sentiment influences the mass public. Here, we rely on the theory of legitimation to argue that explicitly Christian nationalist behavior can validate the use of religious logic in Supreme Court decisions. Recall that legitimation is likeliest to occur among those low in Christian nationalism. It is those *low* in support for a policy that need it legitimated by the actions of the Court. Here we contend that the same logic should apply to justices' behavior and Christian nationalism.

Data and Methodology

To examine the legitimation of certain decision making factors at the Supreme Court, we employ a separate subset of the Cint Theory data we used in our previous analysis. Participants who were randomly sorted into a control group read the following statement:

In 1972, Chief Justice Warren Burger changed the shape of the U.S. Supreme

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Court's bench from a straight bench to a U-shaped bench. The Court still uses this U-shaped bench today.

Participants randomly sorted into the treatment group read the following:

Recently, Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito was recorded at a Supreme Court gala agreeing with a reporter who said "people in this country who believe in God have got to keep fighting for that, to return our country to a place of godliness."

Justice Alito responded, "I agree with you, I agree with you."

Justice Alito was recently in the news when media outlets discovered a flag with a Christian nationalist symbol flew outside his vacation home.

Both stories are true (see Black, Johnson and Owens 2018; Kantor, Toler and Tate 2024; VanSickle 2024). We opted to discuss the Court in the control vignette for two reasons: first, we wanted to ensure we had the same baseline in the event that simply mentioning the Court evokes a reaction; and second, we had already mentioned the Supreme Court in pre-treatment questions and wanted to ensure all participants read about the Court the same number of times before addressing our outcomes of interest.[22]

For our dependent variable, we utilized participants' responses to the religious factor version of "Do you agree with the Supreme Court justices using the following factors to decide cases?" Answers ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" on a five-point Likert-type scale. To estimate the treatment effect, we regress this variable onto an indicator for presence in the treatment category (0 if control, 1 if treatment). We utilize the same Christian nationalism scale we used in the previous part of the analysis.[23] Because our theory is conditional on Christian nationalism, we also include a multiplicative interaction between treatment and adherence to Christian nationalism.[24] We hypothesize:

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[22]We conducted manipulation checks to ensure the treatment worked; as we show in Tables A11 and A12 in the supplemental appendix, the vast majority of participants got the manipulation check question correct.

[23]Results remain substantively the same if we utilize the two-item Christian nationalism measure, see Table A13 in the supplemental appendix.

[24]We want to note here that while Christian nationalism and partisanship are correlated, one is not a

Conditional Legitimation Hypothesis: Conditional on adherence to Christian nationalism, exposure to the Alito treatment will increase support for the use of religious factors in Court decision making, relative to those in the control group.

Ceiling Effect Legitimation Hypothesis: Because legitimation happens among those for whom a policy or decision making factor is *unpopular*, we will observe a significant legitimation effect among treated participants *low* in adherence to Christian nationalism, relative to both similarly situated control group participants and treated participants high in adherence to Christian nationalism.

Empirical Results

Our regression analysis results for participant support for religious logic in decisions, given treatment, is in Table 3. For the final time, we rescaled our variables to range from 0 to 1 to allow for easy comparison. We show a graphical representation of the results in Figure 4, with participants' level of adherence to Christian nationalism on the x-axis and predicted support for the use of religious logic on the y-axis. As Figure 4 shows, we find support for both our hypotheses, lending credence to our theory that Supreme Court justices can legitimate the use of certain decision making factors. First, we see that there is a legitimation effect. On average, participants who read about Justice Alito's agreement with Christian nationalists are more supportive of the justices using religious logic than are people in the control group. Second, this is primarily true of those low in adherence to Christian nationalism, suggesting that a support ceiling does, in fact, exist.

proxy for the other; in our data, the Pearson correlation between the two variables is a moderate 0.43. Nevertheless, we investigate the robustness of our results by including partisanship, as we discuss in detail in the supplemental appendix and show in Figures A1 and A2. In brief, we do not find heterogeneity across partisanship; Christian nationalism appears to operate the same for both Republicans and Democrats.

Table 3: Alito Treatment on Support for Religious Logic in SCOTUS Decisions

Treatment	0.213*
	(0.08)
Christian Nationalism	0.789*
	(0.11)
Treatment × Christian Nationalism	-0.329*
	(0.15)
Constant	0.055
	(0.06)
Observations	272

*p<0.05 on two-tailed test.

These results align nicely with legitimation theory. Our results suggest the participants who are not predisposed to support the use of such factors are the ones more likely to accept their use. As Figure 4 shows, we observe statistically significant differences for treated individuals relative to those in the control for participants with low to middling adherence to Christian nationalism; almost half of the treated individuals fall into this category. In other words, learning that a member of the Court adheres to Christian nationalism legitimates the use of religious logic in Supreme Court decisions. There are two important caveats. First, we do not argue that half of Americans will suddenly support religious logic in court decisions after exposure to a single story; the treatment effect itself is enlightening even if the magnitude does not port to the real world. Second, those for whom legitimation "worked" are still not supportive of the use of religious logic, just less hostile toward it. To wit, on the 0–1 scale, average support is 0.32.
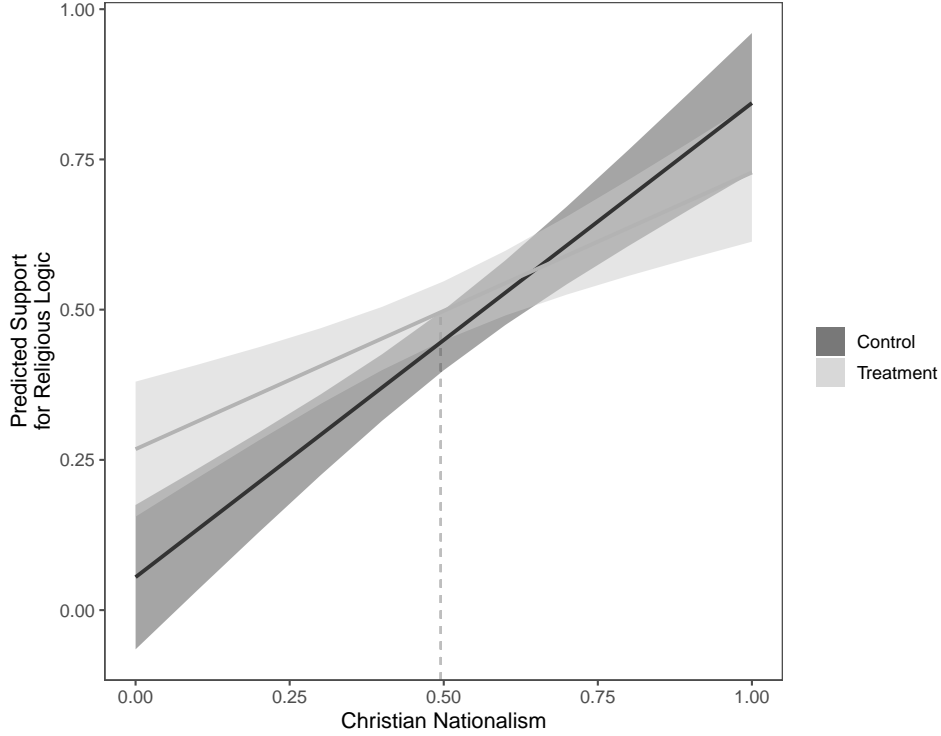
Figure 4: Predicted support for the use of religious logic in Supreme Court decisions, across Christian nationalism, by control and exposure to Alito treatment. Dashed vertical line indicates point at which difference between control and treatment estimates is no longer statistically significant. Model estimates appear in Table 3.

Our findings suggest legitimation theory stretches beyond judicial decisions and toward the methods the justices use to reach them. Specifically, our results highlight the persuasive power Supreme Court justices have over public perceptions of acceptable decision making logic, even in polarizing contexts such as the use of religious reasoning. These findings also demonstrate that the Court's support among the mass public is not a fixed attribute, but rather can be strategically cultivated (or eroded) based on the framing and dissemination of the Court's decisions and actions.

Discussion

In recent years, scholarship on religion, sociology, and politics has turned focus away from devotional and denominational concerns and toward the unique ideology of Christian

nationalism. This ideology has been linked to a host of attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs about the political world, including things like support for violence, generally, and the January 6 Capitol attack, specifically (Armaly, Buckley and Enders 2022); blind patriotism (Perry and Schleifer 2023); support for Russia's war in Ukraine (Perry et al. 2023); people's willingness to uphold civil rights (Davis et al. 2024); and violence against religious minorities (Saiya and Manchanda 2024). In this paper, we applied this new focus to attitudes regarding the Supreme Court. We find that Christian nationalism is related to Court attitudes in three ways: (1) support for specific case outcomes; (2) support for the use of particular types of decision making logic, particularly non-legal logic; and (3) legitimation of the use of religious logic among even those opposed to Christian nationalism.

Given these results, we argue it is critical to understand exactly which dimensions of religion and religiosity relate to attitudes about courts. While some research demonstrates the mass public is not particularly fond of the use of religion in Supreme Court cases (e.g., Farganis 2012), other scholarship identifies greater satisfaction among those perceiving religious overlap with the Court (Badas and Schmidt 2024). Our findings show religious ideology plays an important role in evaluations of the institution and its behavior. We believe this is particularly noteworthy because religion is presently "central to the Court's public profile" (Badas and Schmidt 2024), and because the "unbroken streak of wins for Christian plaintiffs" does not appear to be ending any time soon (Shaw 2023). Put simply, the Court will keep ruling on these issues in ways that align with Christian nationalism's core tenants, and each new decision offers opportunities to increase support from Christian nationalists and for the use of religious logic. Such decisions could ultimately threaten the rights and liberties of people who do not adhere to these beliefs (Corbin 2020).

Of course, our study is not without limitations. While we have considered both case-specific attitudes and broader views about how judges should make legal decisions, Christian nationalism may not relate to *all* judicial attitudes. Consider, for example, that House Speaker Mike Johnson, who hung a Christian nationalist flag outside his House of-

fice and has long sympathized with Christian nationalism (Whitehead and Perry 2023), advocated for the elimination of some federal courts after the judiciary blocked key Trump administration priorities from enactment (Wong, Zanona and Kaplan 2025). But Christian nationalism touches far more than just implicitly and explicitly religious topics; research suggests Christian nationalism is linked to feelings about gun rights (Whitehead, Schnabel and Perry 2018), racial separatism (Perry and Whitehead 2015), and gender traditionalism (Whitehead and Perry 2019), as well as broader issues such as immigration (Baker, Perry and Whitehead 2020b) and economic policy (Gaskins 2024). The Court routinely hears cases on issues such as these. More broadly, reporters and scientists have accused the Court of being "anti-science"—a point of view also linked with Christian nationalism (Baker, Perry and Whitehead 2020a; Paramet 2022). Thus, while it is occasionally difficult to conceive of how Christian nationalism may relate to some of the more mundane cases the Court hears, it is an ideology that appears to underlie all manner of attitudes (but see Smith and Adler Jr 2022). We encourage other scholars to theorize about how ideology may apply to non-religious court cases.

We believe our results open the door for additional scholarship relating Christian nationalism and support for the Court, its decisions, and its off-bench actions. As Armaly, Krewson and Lane (2024) find, support for a nominee has a downstream effect on support for the institution as a whole. Given nominees are often pressed on and voluntarily discuss their religion at confirmation hearings (see Badas and Schmidt 2024), answering "the right way" at hearings could ultimately provide a boost in support for the Court. Similarly, Rivero and Stone (2023) show that individuals prefer case outcomes when judges employ particular legal principles (such as "plain meaning" and "the likely consequence to society"). Perhaps Christian nationalists view other principles as hurting their cause. We encourage future scholarship to consider these questions.

We also wonder about the lastingness of Christian nationalism's presence at the Court. The Court's current slate of pro-Christian decisions stem from decades of activism, during

which a well-funded and well-organized Christian Legal Movement strategically approached the Court with well-crafted legal campaigns to change its rulings across a multitude of areas (Bennett 2017). While that work may be paying off now, such successes inevitably taper off as the Court identifies each movement's limits (Marshall and Hale 2014; Scott, Lane and Schoenherr Forthcoming). Moreover, research suggests the justices are aware of popular backlash and try to head it off where possible (King and Schoenherr 2024), and the justices cannot help but hear the noise surrounding their institution and undoubtedly want to calm it. Continuing to monitor the relationship between Christian nationalism and the Court will provide insight into one movement's immediate success as well as broader information about legal movements' successes and failures. Such research is surely useful, given varied interests continue to learn from each other on their way to legal wins.

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Supplemental Appendix

A   Christian Nationalism Survey Questions

Overturning Roe [Question 40d]

- How much do you favor or oppose each of the following? The Supreme Court overturning Roe versus Wade, the 1973 Supreme Court decision that affirmed a constitutional right to abortion. [Strongly favor; Somewhat favor; Somewhat oppose; Strongly oppose]

Christian Nationalism Questions [Question 43, presented randomly]

- How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? [Completely agree; Mostly agree; Mostly disagree; Completely disagree]

  - God intended America to be a new promised land where European Christians could create a society that could be an example to the rest of the world.
  - U.S. laws should be based on Christian values.
  - Being Christian is an important part of being truly American.
  - The U.S. government should declare America a Christian nation.
  - If the U.S. moves away from our Christian foundations, we will not have a country anymore.
  - We must maintain a strict separation of church and state.
  - God has called Christians to exercise dominion over all areas of American society.
  - The federal government should not favor one religion over another.

Participant Religiosity [Question RELIMP4]

- Which of the following comes closest to how you think about the place of religion in your life? [Religion is the not important in my life; Religion is not as important as other things in my life; Religion is one among many important things in my life; Religion is the most important thing in my life]

Participant Religious Service Attendance [Question ATTEND4A]

- Over the past year, how often have you done each of the following? [Never; Seldom; A few times a year; One or twice a month; Once a week; More than once a week]

  - Attended virtual religious events other than worship services
  - Aside from weddings and funerals, attended religious services, either virtually or in person
  - Had a conversation with someone who belongs to a different religion from your own
  - Volunteered your time at a charity, religious organization, or school
  - Donated money to a church or other religious congregation or charity

Ex Ante Abortion Position [Question 11A]

- Do you think abortion should be legal or illegal? [Legal in all cases; Legal in most cases; Illegal in most cases; Illegal in all cases]

Political Variables [Questions 42A, 42B, 21, PID100, PID110, PID120, PID130]

- Do you have a favorable or an unfavorable view of each of the following people or terms? [Have not heard of; Very unfavorable; Somewhat unfavorable; Somewhat favorable; Very favorable]

  – Joe Biden

  – Donald Trump

- In general, do you think of yourself as...[Extremely conservative; Conservative; Slightly conservative; Moderate, middle of the road; Slightly liberal; Liberal; Extremely liberal]

- Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as...[Republican; Democrat; Independent; Something else]

  – [If answered "Republican":] Would you call yourself a...[Not very strong Republican; Republican]

  – [If answered "Democrat":] Would you call yourself a...[Not very strong Democrat; Democrat]

  – [If answered "Independent" or "Something else":] Do you think of yourself as closer to the...[Republican Party; Democratic Party; Neither]

Demographic Variables [Questions I-EDUC, I-GENDER, I-INCOME, PPAGE, PPETHM, I-RELIGION]

- Education, 5 Categories [No high school diploma or GED; High school graduate; Some college or Associate's degree; Bachelor's degree; Master's degree or above]

- Gender [Male; Female]

- Household income [Less than $10,000; $10,000 to $24,999; $25,000 to $49,999; $50,000 to $74,999; $75,000 to $99,999; $100,000 or more]

- Age [18-94]

- Race/Ethnicity, Census categories [White, Non-Hispanic; Black, Non-Hispanic; Other, Non-Hispanic; Hispanic, 2+ Races, Non-Hispanic]

- What is your religion? Select one answer only. [Catholic; Evangelical or Protestant Christian; Other religion; No religion]

B Christian Nationalism Survey Summary Statistics and Psychometric Properties

Table A1: Christian Nationalism Battery Items

	Eigenvalue	Prop. Var. Explained
Factor 1	4.56	0.85
Factor 2	0.49	0.09

	Mean (Std. Dev.)	Factor Score
God intended America to be a new promised land where European Christians could create a society that could be an example to the rest of the world.	1.95 (1.04)	0.79
U.S. laws should be based on Christian values.	2.22 (1.08)	0.82
Being Christian is an important part of being truly American	2.00 (1.05)	0.87
The U.S. government should declare America a Christian nation	1.90 (1.05)	0.86
If the U.S. moves away from our Christian foundations, we will not have a country anymore.	2.18 (1.12)	0.87
We must maintain strict separation of church and state. (r)	1.75 (0.89)	0.46
God has called Christians to exercise dominion over all areas of American society.	1.73 (0.94)	0.81
The federal government should not favor one religion over another. (r)	1.42 (0.73)	0.39
Cronbach's alpha	0.903	
Mean (Std. Dev.) of scale (range 0–1)	0.299 (0.257)	

(r) indicates item is reverse coded.

C Christian Nationalism Survey Participant Demographics

Table A2: Participant Demographics

Variable	Count	Percent of Group
Strong Democrat	1258	20.36 (%)
Not so strong Democrat	751	12.15(%)
Lean Democrat	691	11.18 (%)
Independent	794	12.85 (%)
Lean Republican	542	8.77 (%)
Not so strong Republican	893	14.45 (%)
Strong Republican	1251	20.24(%)
Male	2849	45.86 (%)
Female	3363	54.14 (%)
Catholic	1468	23.92 (%)
Evangelical or Protestant Christian	2154	35.10 (%)
Other religion	1070	17.44 (%)
No religion	1445	23.55 (%)
No high school diploma or GED	268	4.31 (%)
High school graduate	1301	20..94 (%)
Some college or Associate's degree	1883	30.31 (%)
Bachelor's degree	1561	25.13 (%)
Master's degree or above	1199	19.30 (%)
Less than $10,000	274	5.44 (%)
$10,000-$24,999	600	11.91 (%)
$25,000-$49,999	1147	22.78 (%)
$50,000-$74,999	1048	20.81 (%)
$75,000-$99,999	853	16.94 (%)
$100,000 or more	1114	22.12 (%)

D   Christian Nationalism Survey Regression Tables

Table A3: OLS Regression—Support for *Dobbs*

Variable	Paper Model	Fixed Effects	Christian Nationalism × Ideology	Christian Nationalism × Evangelical
Christian Nationalism	0.114*	−0.116*	0.376*	0.183*
	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.087)	(0.048)
Religious Importance	0.038	−0.045	0.030	0.028
	(0.027)	(0.033)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Service Attendance	0.073	−0.074	0.072	0.072
	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.041)
Legal Abortion Support	−0.277*	0.277*	−0.275*	−0.277*
	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.032)
Biden Favorability	−0.093*	0.093*	−0.090*	−0.092*
	(0.031)	(0.032)	(0.031)	(0.031)
Trump Favorability	0.120*	−0.120*	0.120*	0.118*
	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.031)
Self-identified Ideology	0.235*	−0.236*	0.376*	0.227*
	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.056)	(0.042)
Partisan Identification	0.063	−0.063	0.058	0.063
	(0.036)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)
Ideological Strength	0.072*	−0.071*	0.121*	0.078*
	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.027)	(0.022)
Partisan Strength	−0.005	0.003	−0.000	−0.003
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)
Education	0.003	−0.003	0.005	0.004
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Female	−0.040*	0.040*	−0.039*	−0.040*
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Income	0.001	−0.001	0.002	0.001
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Age	0.000	−0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Black, Non-Hispanic	0.070*	−0.069*	0.059∗	0.065*
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)
Other, Non-Hispanic	0.057	−0.057	0.049	0.055
	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.042)
Hispanic	0.024	−0.025	0.020	0.022
	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Multiracial, Non-Hispanic	0.075	−0.075	0.073	0.073
	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.041)
Evangelical	0.006	−0.008	0.008	0.097*
	(0.018)	(0.020)	(0.018)	(0.035)
Evangelical or Protestant		0.002		
		(0.020)		
Other Religion		−0.003		
		(0.025)		
No Religion		−0.012		
		(0.024)		
Chr. Nat. × Ideo. Strength			−0.464*	
			(0.137)	
Chr. Nat. × Evangelical				−0.204*
				(0.069)
Constant	0.274*	0.738*	0.194*	0.264*
	(0.048)	(0.055)	(0.052)	(0.048)
Observations	4,385	4,385	4,385	4,385

*p<0.05 on two-tailed test

Table A4: OLS Regression—Support for *Dobbs* (Two-item scale of Christian Nation and Christian Values questions, see Davis (2023))

Variable	Coefficient (Std. Error)
Christian Nationalism (Two-Item Scale)	0.051* (0.022)
Religious Importance	0.041* (0.020)
Service Attendance	0.078* (0.028)
Legal Abortion Support	-0.317* (0.021)
Biden Favorability	-0.108* (0.022)
Trump Favorability	0.112* (0.020)
Self-identified Ideology	0.251* (0.029)
Partisan Identification	0.058* (0.025)
Ideological Strength	0.083* (0.016)
Partisan Strength	0.006 (0.016)
Education	0.004 (0.005)
Female	-0.050* (0.010)
Income	0.000 (0.004)
Age	0.000 (0.000)
Black, Non-Hispanic	0.057* (0.019)
Other, Non-Hispanic	0.024 (0.031)
Hispanic	0.030 (0.016)
Multiracial, Non-Hispanic	0.036 (0.031)
Evangelical	0.032* (0.013)
Intercept	0.308* (0.037)
Observations	4,371

*$p<0.05$ on two-tailed test.

E Christian Nationalism Survey Variance Inflation Factor of Full Model in Table 1

The VIF columns display the variance inflation factor and the tolerance (1/VIF) to examine the multicollinearity for our full model displayed in Table 1, particularly between Christian nationalism and evangelicalism. The VIF increases when one independent variable is strongly correlated with another. Rule of thumb suggests that VIF should not surpass 10 without additional diagnostics (O'Brien 2007). A stricter test suggests four, with values lower than that being of no concern. As we show below, our results across models, particularly for evangelicalism and Christian nationalism, are well below these benchmarks, so we see no increase in either value when evangelical is added to the model.

Table A5: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Model

Variable	Full Model		No Evangelical	
	VIF	1/VIF	VIF	1/VIF
Christian Nationalism	2.25	0.396	2.39	0.419
Religious Importance	2.14	0.466	1.97	0.508
Service Attendance	1.56	0.642	1.51	0.661
Legal Abortion Support	1.84	0.542	1.82	0.548
Biden Favorability	2.88	0.347	2.81	0.356
Trump Favorability	2.61	0.383	2.58	0.388
Self-identified Ideology	2.45	0.409	2.43	0.412
Partisan Identification	3.56	0.281	3.51	0.285
Ideological Strength	1.25	0.802	1.24	0.810
Partisan Strength	1.25	0.801	1.26	0.796
Education	1.36	0.737	1.37	0.731
Female	1.06	0.943	1.06	0.947
Income	1.25	0.800	1.25	0.801
Age	1.13	0.882	1.14	0.878
Black, Non-Hispanic	1.23	0.816	1.20	0.834
Other, Non-Hispanic	1.02	0.976	1.03	0.970
Hispanic	1.13	0.884	1.12	0.890
Multiracial, Non-Hispanic	1.02	0.980	1.02	0.981
Evangelical	1.51	0.660		
Mean VIF	1.73		1.71	

F   Experimental Survey Participant Demographics

Table A6: Participant Demographics

Variable	Count	Percent of Group	2020 ANES
Strong Democrat	208	22.86 (%)	23.2 (%)
Not so strong Democrat	105	11.54(%)	11.5 (%)
Lean Democrat	88	9.67(%)	11.8 (%)
Independent	108	11.87(%)	11.8 (%)
Lean Republican	87	9.56 (%)	10.5 (%)
Not so strong Republican	120	13.19 (%)	10.5 (%)
Strong Republican	194	21.32(%)	21.0 (%)
Male	560	49.34 (%)	45.45 (%)
Female	575	50.66 (%)	53.74 (%)
White	792	69.78 (%)	72.02 (%)
Black	142	12.51 (%)	8.77 (%)
American Indian or Alaskan Native	26	2.29	2.08 (%)
Native Hawaiian	4	0.35	–
Indian	18	1.59 (%)	–
Chinese	9	0.79 (%)	–
Filipino	11	1.97 (%)	–
Japanese	2	0.18 (%)	–
Korean	6	0.53 (%)	–
Vietnamese	2	0.26 (%)	–
Asian:Other	8	0.70 (%)	–
Asian or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	—	—	3.43 (%)
Some other race	96	8.46(%)	–
Prefer not to answer	16	1.41 (%)	1.16 (%)
Multiple Races	—	—	3.27 (%)
Not of Hispanic origin	986	86.87(%)	90.07 (%)
Hispanic origin	149	13.13 (%)	9.20 (%)
Less than high school degree	82	7.22(%)	4.54 (%)
High school graduate	349	30.75 (%)	16.14 (%)
Post high school vocational training	49	4.32 (%)	—
Some college, but no degree	209	18.41(%)	20.34 (%)
Associate's degree	121	10.66(%)	13.36 (%)
Bachelor's degree in college	197	17.36(%)	24.82 (%)
Master's degree	87	7.67(%)	14.31 (%)
Doctoral degree	22	1.94(%)	4.92 (%)

G Experimental Survey Questions

Pre-Treatment: Ex ante policy positions

- We are going to ask you a few questions about your thoughts on political issues. In general, to what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements? [Strongly disagree; Disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Agree; Strongly agree]

  - Police officers should be required to obtain a warrant in order to make an individual unlock his or her cellphone.
  - Law abiding citizens should have the right to own and carry handguns.
  - Colleges should use affirmative action programs to increase the number of Black and minority students on their campuses.
  - Please select "Strongly disagree."
  - Contract disputes ought to be settled through arbitration or mediation, not lawsuits, whenever possible.
  - Public schools should schedule time when children may pray silently if they want to do so.
  - Women should be able to obtain most abortions without government interference.

Pre-Treatment: Religion

- How often do you attend religious services? [Every week; Almost every week; Once or twice a month; A few times a year; Never]

- What is your present religion, if any? [Protestant Christian; Roman Catholic; Mormon; Orthodox Christian; Jewish; Muslim; Buddhist; Hindu; Atheist (do not believe in God); Agnostic (unsure about whether there is a God); Something else; Nothing in particular]

  - [If selected "Protestant Christian":] Would you describe yourself as a born-again or evangelical Christian, or not? [No, not a born-again or evangelical Christian; Yes, born-again or evangelical Christian]

Pre-Treatment: Christian nationalism

- Please indicate your agreement with the following statements. [Strongly disagree; Disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Agree; Strongly agree]

  - The federal government should declare the United States a Christian nation.
  - The federal government should advocate Christian values.
  - The federal government should enforce strict separation of church and state.
  - The federal government should allow the display of religious symbols in public spaces.

– The success of the United States is part of God's plan.

– The federal government should allow prayer in public schools.

Pre-Treatment: Court ideology

• On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being very conservative and 7 being very liberal, how liberal or conservative do you think the U.S. Supreme Court is? [1-7]

Pre-Treatment: PID and ideology

• Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what? [Democrat; Republican; Independent; Other; No preference, neither; Don't know]

– [If answered "Democrat"] Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or a not very strong Democrat? [Strong; Not very strong; Don't know]

– [If answered "Republican"] Would you call yourself a strong Republican or a not very strong Republican? [Strong; Not very strong; Don't know]

– [If answered "Independent," "Other," "No preference, neither," or "Don't know"] Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party?

• We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. When it comes to politics, do you usually think of yourself as extremely liberal, liberal, slightly liberal, moderate or middle of the road, slightly conservative, extremely conservative, or haven't you thought much about this? [Extremely liberal; Liberal; Slightly liberal; Moderate; Slightly conservative; Conservative; Extremely conservative; Haven't thought much about this; Don't know]

Post-treatment: Decision-making factors

• How much do you agree with Supreme Court justices using the following factors to decide cases? [Strongly agree; Somewhat agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Somewhat disagree; Strongly disagree]

– Laws passed by Congress

– Past Supreme Court decisions

– Scientific evidence

– Politicians' opinions

– Interest groups' opinions

– Religious considerations

– Personal considerations

– Partisan preferences

Post-treatment: Manipulation checks

- [If in the control group:] Earlier, you read a story about the U.S. Supreme Court justices. Do you happen to remember what, specifically, the story was about? [The number of justices; The shape of the bench; Specific cases the Court has heard; The construction of the Supreme Court building in 1935]

- [If in the treatment group:] Earlier, you read a story about a Supreme Court justice. Do you happen to remember which justice you read about? [Samuel Alito; Clarence Thomas; Neil Gorsuch; Brett Kavanaugh]

H   Experimental Survey Factor Analysis

Table A7: Results from Factor Analysis with Oblique Rotation.

A. Eigenvalues		
	Eigenvalue	Prop. variance Explained
Factor 1	2.85	0.65
Factor 2	1.14	0.26
Factor 3	0.21	0.05
B. Factor Scores		
	Political	Expertise
Laws passed by Congress	0.02	**0.70**
Past SC decisions	0.08	**0.51**
Scientific evidence	-0.11	**0.61**
Politicians' opinions	**0.80**	-0.06
Interest groups' opinions	**0.76**	-0.01
Religious considerations	**0.63**	0.05
Personal considerations	**0.74**	0.04
Partisan preferences	**0.77**	0.00

Bold text indicates significant factor loading.

I   Experimental Survey Regression Tables for Factor Support

Table A8: Christian Nationalism and Support for Judicial Decision Making Models, including estimates for race and additional treatment categories.

	Dependent variable:		
	Religious	Political	Expertise
Christian Nationalism	0.436*	0.181*	0.043
	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Partisanship	−0.006	0.002	−0.067*
	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.03)
Ideology	0.082	−0.030	0.040
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Partisan Strength	−0.002	0.011	0.014
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Ideological Strength	0.028	0.001	0.047*
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)
SCOTUS Ideological Disagreement	−0.081	−0.085*	−0.033
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Knowledge	−0.063	−0.172*	0.150*
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.03)
Politicization	−0.129*	−0.120*	−0.067*
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Legitimacy	0.119*	0.169*	0.022
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Religiosity	0.107*	0.046	−0.017
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Age	0.042	−0.072	0.024
	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Education	−0.090*	−0.075*	0.016
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Female	0.037	−0.007	−0.029
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Black	0.060	0.022	−0.019
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
American Indian	0.087	0.099	−0.024
	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Indian	0.141	0.145*	−0.049
	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.06)
Chinese	−0.162	0.054	0.040
	(0.13)	(0.10)	(0.09)
Filipino	0.010	−0.013	−0.027
	(0.10)	(0.08)	(0.07)
Japanese	−0.314	−0.445*	−0.108
	(0.29)	(0.22)	(0.20)
Vietnamese	0.154	−0.060	0.129
	(0.17)	(0.13)	(0.11)
Asian: Other	0.343	0.147	0.148
	(0.20)	(0.16)	(0.14)
Native Hawaiian	−0.278	−0.085	−0.229
	(0.29)	(0.22)	(0.20)
Other Race	0.002	0.018	−0.019
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
No Race Given	−0.231*	−0.073	0.063
	(0.11)	(0.39)	(0.08)
Treatment A	−0.013	−0.017	−0.028
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Treatment B	0.070	0.027	−0.023
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Treatment C	0.014	0.015	−0.025
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Treatment D	0.020	0.008	0.006
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Treatment E	−0.034	−0.055	−0.008
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Duration	0.000	0.000	0.000*
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Constant	0.186*	0.507*	0.596*
	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.00)
Observations	729	727	727

*p<0.05 on two-tailed test. Treatments A–E are not used in this paper.

Table A9: Christian Nationalism and Support for Judicial Decision Making Models (Two-item scale of Christian Nation and Christian Values questions, see Davis 2023)

	Dependent variable:		
	Religious	Political	Expertise
Christian Nationalism (Two-item)	0.368*	0.168*	0.000
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Partisanship	−0.005	−0.001	−0.061*
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Ideology	0.085	−0.03	0.048
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Partisan Strength	−0.006	0.010	0.016
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Ideological Strength	0.025	−0.002	0.048*
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)
SCOTUS Ideological Disagreement	−0.076	−0.078*	−0.040
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Knowledge	−0.076	−0.174*	0.142*
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.03)
Politicization	−0.131*	−0.122*	−0.069
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Legitimacy	0.100*	0.159*	0.022
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Religiosity	0.102*	0.041	−0.010
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Age	0.023	−0.084	0.028
	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Education	−0.090*	−0.073*	0.011
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Female	0.043*	−0.005	−0.029
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Black	0.062	0.023	−0.014
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
American Indian	0.077	0.095	−0.026
	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Indian	0.155	0.152*	−0.050
	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.06)
Chinese	−0.187	0.041	0.043
	(0.13)	(0.10)	(0.09)
Filipino	−0.004	−0.017	−0.032
	(0.10)	(0.08)	(0.07)
Japanese	−0.353	−0.455*	−0.127
	(0.28)	(0.22)	(0.20)
Vietnamese	0.112	−0.079	0.128
	(0.16)	(0.13)	(0.12)
Asian: Other	0.410*	0.174	0.156
	(0.20)	(0.16)	(0.14)
Native Hawaiian	−0.340	−0.115	−0.224
	(0.28)	(0.22)	(0.20)
Other Race	0.006	0.020	−0.020
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
No Race Given	−0.230*	−0.073	0.065
	(0.11)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Treatment A	−0.014	−0.017	−0.029
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Treatment B	0.067	0.027	−0.023
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Treatment C	0.014	0.015	−0.025
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Treatment D	0.026	0.011	0.005
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Treatment E	−0.034	−0.056	−0.009
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Duration	0.000	0.000	0.000*
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Constant	0.253*	0.529*	0.616*s
	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.05)
Observations	728	725	725

*p<0.05 on two-tailed test. Treatments A–E are not used in this paper.

Table A10: Partisan Factor Excluding Religious Factor Model

Christian Nationalism	0.537*
	(0.170)
Partisanship	-0.010
	(0.12)
Ideology	-0.143
	(0.15)
Partisan Strength	0.054
	(0.11)
Ideological Strength	-0.007
	(0.10)
SCOTUS Ideological Disagreement	-0.311*
	(0.13)
Knowledge	-0.643*
	(0.14)
Politicization	-0.445*
	(0.15)
Legitimacy	0.653*
	(0.15)
Religiosity	0.131
	(0.09)
Age	-0.321*
	(0.16)
Education	-0.262*
	(0.12)
Female	-0.056
	(0.06)
Black	0.055
	(0.11)
American Indian	0.350
	(0.24)
Indian	0.518*
	(0.25)
Chinese	0.291
	(0.38)
Filipino	-0.061
	(0.30)
Japanese	-1.704*
	(0.85)
Vietnamese	-0.308
	(0.49)
Asian: Other	0.438
	(0.60)
Native Hawaiian	-0.298
	(0.84)
Other Race	0.050
	(0.12)
No Race Given	-0.170
	(0.32)
Treatment A	-0.073
	(0.11)
Treatment B	0.067
	(0.11)
Treatment C	0.041
	(0.11)
Treatment D	0.021
	(0.11)
Treatment E	-0.209
	(0.11)
Duration	0.000
	(0.00)
Constant	0.496*
	(0.23)
Observations	727

*$p<0.05$ on two-tailed test.

Treatments A–E are not used in this paper.

J Experimental Survey Manipulation Checks

As a manipulation check, we asked participants in the treatment groups, "Earlier, you read a story about a Supreme Court justice. Do you happen to remember which justice you read about?" For answers, they could select, "Samuel Alito" (the correct answer), "Clarence Thomas," "Neil Gorsuch," or "Brett Kavanaugh." As we show in Table A11, about 60% of participants in the treatment group answered the question correctly.

Table A11: Treatment Group Manipulation Check

Answer	Count
Samuel Alito	82
Clarence Thomas	37
Neil Gorsuch	11
Brett Kavanaugh	9
Total	139

We also asked participants in the control group, "Earlier you read a story about the U.S. Supreme Court justices. Do you happen to remember what, specifically, the story was about?" For answers, they could select, "The number of justices," "The shape of the bench" (the correct answer), "Specific cases the Court has heard," or "The construction of the Supreme Court building in 1935." As we show in Table A12, the overwhelming majority of participants got this question right.

Table A12: Control Group Manipulation Check

Answer	Count
The number of justices	9
The shape of the bench	109
Specific cases the Court has heard	10
The construction of the Supreme Court building in 1935	5
Total	133

K Experimental Survey Robustness to Partisan Effects

Given that, both in our data and in existing scholarship, Republican identifiers tend to score higher on measures of Christian nationalism, it is imperative to highlight that the use of Christian nationalism does not act as a stand-in or proxy for partisanship in our experiment. (In observational models, partisanship is accounted for.)

First, the Pearson correlation between partisanship and Christian nationalism in the Theorem data is 0.43. Most rules of thumb suggest that this is only a moderate relationship. Still, it does indicate it is worthwhile to further investigate the relationship. We do so in two ways. First, we simply omit Christian nationalism from the regression used to estimate the effects in Figure 4. In Figure A1, we display the predicted level of support for the use of religious logic in judicial decisions for Democrats and Republicans among treated participants only. Any difference among control participants would reflect ex ante differences in Christian nationalism, which we already know exist (per previous scholarship and the correlation reported here).
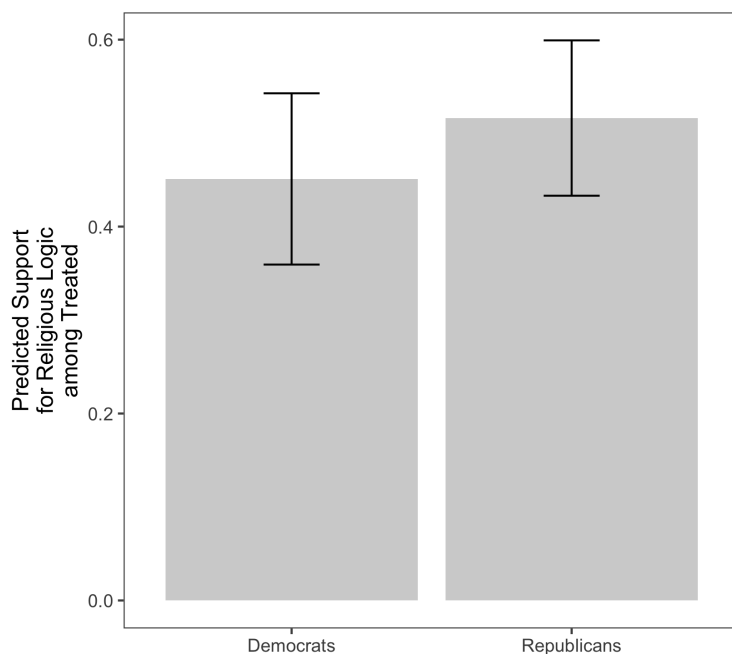

Figure A1: Predicted support for use of religion in judicial decision making, by partisanship, among treated participants only.

As the figure shows, there is no difference in predicted support for religious logic across Democrats and Republicans. Per the logic of our experimental design and theory, if Christian nationalism were merely a proxy for partisanship, we would expect Democrats to have higher support for the use of religious logic than Republicans. Of course, this is because legitimation happens among those low in a given attitude, trait, etc.; if Democrats were systematically low in Christian nationalism (which would be implied if one were a proxy

for the other), these are the individuals prone to increases. Given that we do not see this here, but we do see increases in support for religious logic among those low in Christian nationalism, suggests partisanship and nationalism are operating differently. We believe this is true broadly, but Figure 2 shows that this is certainly the case in our data.

Next, we re-estimate the regression from the main text and include a three-way interaction between treatment, Christian nationalism, and Republican identification (where 1 = Republican and 0 = Democrat). We display the marginal effect of Christian nationalism on support for religious logic across partisanship.
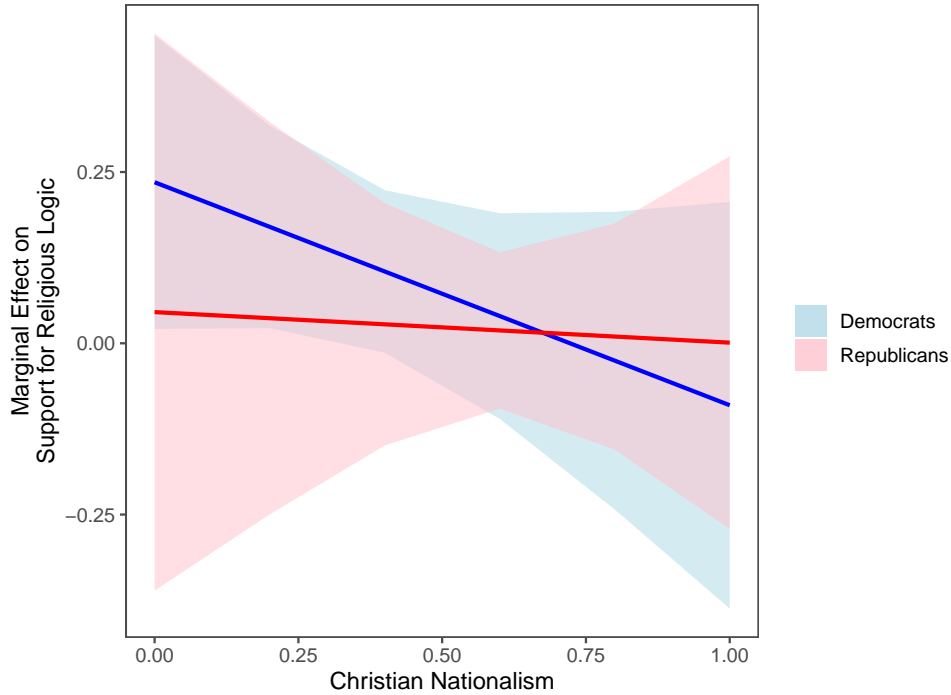

Figure A2: Predicted support for use of religion in judicial decision making, by partisanship, among treated participants only.

In essence, we find no independent effect of including partisanship in the regression. First of all, there is never a discernible effect; even though the slope for Democrats is downward facing, it is not statistically significant (i.e., a positive slope could fit in the confidence intervals). Second, while the marginal effect is significant for Democrats who are low in Christian nationalism—which, at first glance, might accord with our findings in the main text—the estimate is not distinct from the estimates for Republicans.

All in all, we find no partisan heterogeneity in the experimental findings displayed in the main text.

L   Experimental Survey Regression Tables for Treatment Analysis

Table A13: Alito Treatment on Support for Religious Logic in SCOTUS Decisions (Two-item scale of Christian Nation and Christian Values questions, see Davis (2023))

Treatment	0.186*
	(0.07)
Christian Nationalism	0.580*
	(0.08)
Treatment × Christian Nationalism	-0.308*
	(0.12)
Constant	0.184
	(0.05)
Observations	272

*p<0.05 on two-tailed test.

M   Ethical Declaration

M.1   Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest to report.

M.2   Research Involving Human and Animal Rights

In this manuscript, we adhere to ethical principles in social science. This research uses human participants, who provided informed consent and were debriefed at the end of the survey. Our survey participants were paid by Cint Theorem, which does not reveal to researchers how much is given to each participant. This research did not benefit or harm particular groups, and vulnerable populations were not sampled.