

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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June 6 , 2022

SENT VIA U.S. MAIL

The Honorable Marjorie Taylor Greene
U.S. House of Representatives
1023 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Dangerous and ignorant endorsement of Christian nationalism

Dear Representative Greene:

We are writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to correct the record on a number of serious misstatements you made recently in defense of Christian nationalism. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 36,000 members across the country, including more than 500 members in Georgia and an Atlanta-area chapter. FFRF protects the constitutional separation between state and church and educates about nontheism.

On June 2, 2022, you discussed religion in America and nationalism on your show MLG Live, in a program densely packed with misinformation. You said that there is hopelessness all across the country, and “this hopelessness exists because America turned away from God. . . . you can take it all the way back to **when they took prayer out of school**, when they took prayers away from the beginnings of football games, when they took prayers out of the PTA meetings . . . this was the beginning of the decline in America.”¹

You claimed that there is a “revival” going on, and that Americans are “turning back to God,” but that the media was failing to cover this story.² You told your viewers that “this is not on the news, you’re not going to see it anywhere else,”³ and added that “Christianity doesn’t divide people.”⁴

¹ MTG Live, Ep. 4 (June 2, 2022), at 20:18, *available at* [rumble.com/v175brj-mtglive-ep-4-a-change-in-temperature.html](https://www.rumble.com/v175brj-mtglive-ep-4-a-change-in-temperature.html) (emphasis added).

² *Id.* at 21:00.

³ *Id.* at 21:16.

⁴ *Id.* at 23:06.

Finally, **you explicitly endorsed Christian nationalism**, first conflating the term “nationalism” with patriotism by asking, “Is there something wrong with loving your country?”⁵ You continued, “**nationalism is a good thing**. It’s where all Americans should be. . . . We should be proud of nationalism. . . . and lastly, we should be most proud of Christianity. So if Christian nationalism is something to be scared of, they’re lying to you. . . . If we’re going to label it ‘Christian nationalism,’ this movement will actually be the movement that stops the school shootings”⁶

America’s secular government is what makes it America.

The main theme of your misstatements—whether you are making them out of ignorance or just to pander—is that you are falsely equating patriotism with piety, and treating America as though it were a Christian nation.

This could not be further from the truth. In reality, separating state and church is the most uniquely American vision that our Founders had. Facing a backdrop of European nations that had experienced the folly of mixing state and church, and of tying religion to a national identity, as well as the experience of persecution and discrimination based on religion in almost all of the original colonies, the framers of the U.S. Constitution deliberately excluded any mention of a deity or Christianity. Every mention of religion in the U.S. Constitution is exclusionary, including prohibitions on religious tests for public office, implicitly in the godless oath of office prescribed for the presidency and later, in the First Amendment’s historic bar of any establishment of religion by the government. The framers of the Constitution were first among nations to invest sovereignty not in a deity, but in “We the People.” The proscription against religion in government has served our nation well, with the U.S. Constitution now the longest living constitution in history, and our nation spared the constant religious wars afflicting theocratic regions around the world.

Further, you repeated a tired, long debunked trope about America “taking prayer out of schools,” and blamed this for America’s “decline,” actually romanticizing a time when schools were segregated, women in the workforce were discriminated against, and same-sex relationships were criminalized. In fact, at the time of the 1962 and 1963 decrees against school-sponsored prayers and bible-reading, it is estimated that religious observances were unknown in about half of the nation’s public schools.

⁵ *Id.* at 23:25.

⁶ *Id.* at 23:49 (emphasis added).

In reality, the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects students' and teachers' free exercise of religion, and personal prayer was never removed from schools. As the old saw goes, so long as there are pop math quizzes, there will be prayer in public schools. What has been removed is **government organized or imposed prayer upon students**, which were an affront to religious liberty in a pluralistic society. Christianity and religion in general have always been inherently divisive. Keeping religion out of the government is a fundamental American ideal, is essential for true religious freedom, and has been a tremendous asset to our society. This is a principle to be proud of. Your attempt to paint it as some sort of ill is both factually incorrect and un-American.

You are wrong about both nationalism and Christian nationalism.

Your shocking endorsement of Christian nationalism is doubly wrong. Intentionally or not, you conflated “nationalism” with patriotism, and “Christian nationalism” with Christianity.

First, nationalism is very different than patriotism. George Orwell wrote an essay in 1945 discussing nationalism, explaining in clear terms what has been repeatedly affirmed in the more than 70 years since then:

Nationalism is not to be confused with patriotism. Both words are normally used in so vague a way that any definition is liable to be challenged, but one must draw a distinction between them, since two different and even opposing ideas are involved. By ‘patriotism’ I mean devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life, which one believes to be the best in the world but has no wish to force on other people. Patriotism is of its nature defensive, both militarily and culturally. Nationalism, on the other hand, is inseparable from the desire for power. The abiding purpose of every nationalist is to secure more power and more prestige, not for himself but for the nation or other unit in which he has chosen to sink his own individuality.⁷

Loving your country is not nationalism. Nationalism is what led Europe into centuries of endless wars over imagined borders and notions of national superiority. Like the unification of state and church, this is an embarrassing misstep in European history that Americans should be proud we have learned from. Nationalism is inherently divisive and dangerous.

⁷ George Orwell, *Notes on Nationalism* (1945), available at orwell.ru/library/essays/nationalism/english/e_nat.

Christian nationalism is more toxic still. Its implication that America is a Christian nation, and that only Christians can be true Americans, is anathema to America's founding principles and at odds with reality. Many American Christians respect the diversity of our culture, and understand that their fellow Americans may not share their religious values. This can be seen in groups like Christians Against Christian Nationalism.⁸ Anyone who respects American values *must* oppose Christian nationalism, as the two ideologies are fundamentally at odds.

Finally, your suggestion that America has a Christian government is not only at odds with our country's history and laws, but it also alienates your constituents. Non-religious Americans are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population by religious identification — 35 percent of Americans are non-Christians, and this includes the more than one in four Americans who now identify as religiously unaffiliated.⁹ A recent survey found that 21 percent of Americans born after 1999 are atheist or agnostic.¹⁰ You represent *all* Georgians, including those who do not share your personal religious beliefs, and you should not imply that non-Christians are second-class citizens simply because of their religious identity or lack thereof.

Your endorsement of Christian nationalism is a betrayal of your oath of office to the U.S. Constitution.

Very truly,



Annie Laurie Gaylor & Dan Barker

Co-presidents

ALG/DB:rdj

⁸ www.christiansagainstchristiannationalism.org/statement.

⁹ Pew Research Center, "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace," (Oct. 17, 2019) at <https://pewrsr.ch/2VPiFS7>.

¹⁰ *Atheism Doubles Among Generation Z*, The Barna Group (Jan. 24, 2018), <https://www.barna.com/research/atheism-doubles-among-generation-z/>.