AMERICA IS NOT A PROTESTANT CHRISTIAN STATE

A Reply to Charlie Kirk: History, Conquest, Religion, Reason, and the American Constitution

“The Constitution is a legal document, not a baptismal certificate.”

OPENING ARGUMENT

Charlie Kirk was assassinated on September 10, 2025. His death does not make his historical arguments immune from examination, and it does not make violence against him legitimate. The question here is whether his assertions about America's Christian foundations withstand the evidence.

Kirk's position was not merely that most colonists were Protestant. In public addresses he pointed to Christian officeholding requirements in early colonies, the religious affiliations of the founders, God's appearance in the Declaration of Independence, and the supposed biblical foundations of separated governmental powers. The strongest version of that claim deserves a direct answer: **Was the United States Constitution designed as a Christian political order because its authors and their society were saturated with Christianity?**

There is an obvious historical truth at the beginning of this question. Protestant Christianity shaped much of colonial public life. Churches educated people, structured communities, provided moral vocabulary, and exercised political influence. But influence is not ownership. The historical sources of a political idea are not identical to the legal requirements of a constitution. Roman republicanism, English common law, Enlightenment political philosophy, colonial experiences of persecution, and Christian thought all contributed to the

founding world. No one influence thereby acquired sovereignty over the others.

The Constitution is a legal document, not a baptismal certificate.

My objection goes further. The claim that one exclusive revelation possesses authority over every civilization is not a neutral historical description. It is a theological claim that must defend itself. When such claims gain command of armies, courts, schools, and governments, the evidence of what can follow is written across Europe and the Americas. This is not an accusation against every Christian individual. It is an indictment of identifiable doctrines of coercive religious supremacy and the institutions that enforced them.

The Protestants Who Persecuted Protestants

The Pilgrims came to America seeking liberty to practice their religion. But who persecuted them? Not Hindus, Buddhists, or Muslims. Their persecutors were authorities in Protestant England. The Pilgrims were Protestant Separatists who rejected the established Church of England. They fled first to the Netherlands, then sailed to America in 1620.

Protestants persecuted Protestants over Protestant Christianity.

Anglicans, Baptists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Lutherans, Quakers, and others did not agree about baptism, bishops, predestination, church government, salvation, or who could interpret scripture. Some supported established churches; others suffered under them. Colonial governments themselves sometimes punished religious dissent. Massachusetts authorities executed four Quakers between 1659 and 1661 for defying laws against their return.

If the word *Protestant* did not even identify one agreed set of doctrines, what exactly would a Protestant constitution establish? Which church would define American Christianity? And who would punish those who disagreed?

Answering Kirk's Actual Claims, Not a Convenient Caricature

In a recorded address subsequently circulated through *The Charlie Kirk Show*, Kirk asserted that “55 out of 56” founding figures were Bible-believing churchgoing Christians, and that “nine out of 13” original colonies required a Bible-believing Christian to serve in political office. In another archived 2022 speech, he invoked the Declaration's four references to God and claimed the separation of powers followed the founders' belief that only God should hold all powers together. These are his reported words, not an invented version of his case. [1, 14]

First, **which founders?** The fifty-six signers of the Declaration were not the same group as the delegates who drafted the Constitution. There were fifty-five delegates who attended the 1787 Constitutional Convention, and thirty-nine signed its final text. A sweeping assertion about fifty-six founders' private beliefs requires individual evidence, a definition of “Bible-believing,” and an explanation of why theological biography would change the Constitution's legal provisions. Attendance at church, religious language in correspondence, and adherence to a particular doctrine are not interchangeable facts.

Second, **which office requirements, in which colony, in which year?** Some colonial charters and early state constitutions did impose religious qualifications. Pennsylvania's 1776 constitution required

legislators to affirm belief in God and the divine inspiration of the Old and New Testaments. Delaware's 1776 constitution required an explicitly Trinitarian profession for public office. These are genuine examples of Christian political privilege. They are also evidence of the very system from which the federal Constitution diverged: Article VI barred religious tests for office *under the United States*. A number of states retained discriminatory provisions long after 1787; Massachusetts did not end its established-church arrangements until 1833. The history is not tidy. That makes the difference between state practice and federal text more important, not less.

Third, **the Declaration's language about God is not a Protestant confession.** It speaks of Nature's God, a Creator, the Supreme Judge, and divine Providence. It does not name Jesus Christ, require the Trinity, or prescribe baptism or biblical authority as conditions of citizenship. It declared independence in 1776. It was not the Constitution adopted in 1787.

Fourth, **the separation of legislative, executive, and judicial power is not uniquely biblical.** The framers inherited arguments about mixed government, the English constitution, the failures of concentrated authority, and especially Montesquieu's analysis of separated powers. A Christian can believe that concentration of power is dangerous because humans are fallible. But that belief does not make the institutional mechanism a Protestant revelation. Ask for the constitutional clause that requires Christianity; citing a moral influence is not an answer.

Fifth, **the common-law inheritance is real but not a Christian title deed.** English common law emerged through courts, custom, royal institutions, precedent, and changing social conditions in Christian societies. It also drew upon older and non-theological sources. That a legal institution developed among Christians does not imply every rule of the American constitutional system is Christian doctrine. To prove such a conclusion one must identify the specific rule, the specific religious source, and why that source rather than competing sources controls its meaning.

Kirk's strongest argument thus proves cultural inheritance. It does not prove a Christian constitutional establishment. **A source of influence is not a grant of political supremacy.**

The Framers Wrote a Constitution, Not a Christian Creed

The framers of the federal Constitution worked in a society shaped by Protestant Christianity. Their private beliefs varied. That is historical context, not constitutional text.

What did they write in 1787? Not *We the Protestants*. Not *We the Christians*. Not *We the followers of Jesus Christ*.

They wrote: "We the People."

They did not declare Jesus the sovereign of the United States or authorize a national church. Article VI expressly states:

> *"no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States."*

Those words mean that the federal government cannot make a profession of Christianity—or belief in God—a prerequisite for federal office. A Jew, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Catholic, Zoroastrian, atheist, or agnostic is not constitutionally disqualified by religion.

The First Amendment, ratified in 1791, then forbade Congress to make a law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting its free exercise. The Constitution's original restrictions were not immediately applied to every state: some states retained religious establishments or tests, and modern protections against state establishment developed

through later constitutional law. That distinction is important. It makes the federal Constitution's deliberate refusal to establish a national church all the more unmistakable.

America can have a Christian cultural history without having a Christian federal constitution. The two claims are not interchangeable.

The written Constitution carries more authority than anyone's speculation about the framers' theology.

The Declaration of Independence Is Not a Church Charter

The Declaration of Independence speaks of a Creator and a “Supreme Judge of the world.” A Christian is free to interpret those words according to Christian doctrine. But the Declaration never identifies the Supreme Judge as Jesus Christ; its purpose was to justify political independence, not establish Protestant theology.

The Declaration of 1776 and Constitution of 1787 are different documents with different functions. Neither a theological interpretation of the Declaration nor the Constitution's conventional dating phrase, “Year of our Lord,” can silently create a national religious establishment that the constitutional text does not contain.

A believer's interpretation of God is not automatically the law of the United States.

The Founders Also Left an Explicit Record Against Religious Establishment

The Constitution is not our only evidence. In 1785, James Madison opposed a proposed tax to support Christian teachers in Virginia. His *Memorial and Remonstrance* asked what could stop a government empowered to establish Christianity from privileging one Christian sect over every other. It was not an abstract worry. Colonial America had lived with sectarian tests, persecution, and favored churches. Four Quakers were executed by Massachusetts authorities between 1659 and 1661 for violating laws against their return. Protestants could persecute Protestants, and Christian majorities could deny freedom to Christian minorities.

Thomas Jefferson's *Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom*, enacted in 1786, declared that civil rights do not depend upon religious opinions. It rejected the state's right to compel people to finance religious teachings they disbelieved. Here is a founding-era answer to the claim that public order requires governmental sponsorship of Christianity: **civil standing does not depend on religious assent.**

In 1802 Jefferson told the Danbury Baptists that the First Amendment built a “wall of separation between Church & State.” The letter was not itself a constitutional amendment and its historical interpretation has been debated. But it destroys the contention that separation was a modern invention unknown to the founding generation.

Then consider the Treaty of Tripoli. Article 11 of the English treaty text, ratified by the Senate and signed by President John Adams in 1797, declared that the American government was “not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion.” The corresponding Arabic text does not contain the same clause; that textual discrepancy should be disclosed. Nevertheless, the English text approved by the American government is direct evidence of how federal officials publicly described their government. It is not a replacement for the Constitution. It is corroboration.

There is also inconvenient evidence on the other side. Some founders attended religious services in federal buildings. State churches and religious qualifications survived. The republic was never a uniformly secular society, and the full constitutional restrictions on state establishments developed later. This does not rescue Kirk's conclusion. **The dispute is not whether Christianity was influential. It is whether Christian doctrine was installed as the national government's legal creed. It was not.**

How Christian Emperors Suppressed Europe's Ancestral Religions

Before Christianity became dominant, Europe contained Greek, Roman, Celtic, Germanic, Baltic, and numerous other ancestral religious traditions. Its peoples had their own sanctuaries, rituals, philosophies, and systems of law. Christianity did not arrive in an intellectual vacuum. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and generations of thinkers existed centuries before Jesus.

The Christianization of Europe proceeded through different means—persuasion, patronage, political alliance, and sometimes open coercion. The coercion must not be concealed.

In the late fourth century, Christian Roman imperial government used law against inherited religious practice. In 391 and 392, Emperor Theodosius I issued measures prohibiting sacrifices and other traditional forms of worship. The legislation attacked public religious practices that had long existed before the empire became Christian. The enforcement of these laws varied, but the principle was unmistakable: possession of political power was now being used to suppress rival religious traditions.

What had proved the old religions false? Was every worshipper invited to an open philosophical examination? Or had one religion acquired the machinery of the empire?

A prohibited altar is not a refuted argument. A closed temple is not a proof of divine revelation.

Charlemagne: Baptism Under Threat of Death

The Saxon wars under Charlemagne, fought intermittently from 772 to 804, combined conquest, suppression of resistance, and Christianization. The Saxons were inhabitants of their own lands, not intruders into a Christian state.

The *Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae*, a Frankish law imposed during these wars, is explicit. Its provisions made certain ancestral practices capital offenses. A Saxon who concealed himself unbaptized, refused baptism, and wished to remain with his ancestral religion could be **put to death**. The text also prescribed death for cremating the dead according to inherited rites.

In 782, the Royal Frankish Annals report a mass execution at Verden of 4,500 Saxons following resistance to Frankish rule. Historians debate aspects of the figure and circumstances; the surviving annal nevertheless reports the killing. The Saxon laws leave no uncertainty about one central fact: **refusal of Christian baptism was made punishable by death.**

What kind of spiritual conviction must be enforced by execution?

Accept baptism or die. Abandon the religion of your ancestors or die. That was not religious persuasion. It was state terror in the service of conversion.

The Baltic Crusades of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries brought further conquest to Livonians, Estonians, Old Prussians, and other peoples. Missionaries and military orders operated within campaigns that imposed Christian rule, compelled submission, and sometimes forced conversion. The histories of these peoples were not identical, and not every conversion was forced. But military defeat and Christianization were often joined.

The supposed peaceful march of Christianity across Europe is not an adequate description of this record.

Human Reason Was Not Born in Bethlehem

Europe did not begin with Christianity. Classical Greek philosophy developed questions about evidence, ethics, political obligation, and the nature of reality centuries before the Christian churches existed. India and China likewise developed extensive philosophical civilizations independently of Christian revelation. Socrates, Buddha, Mahavira, Confucius, and later Shankara do not need validation from the New Testament before their arguments can be heard.

Christian philosophers made serious contributions to human thought, including Augustine and Aquinas. That is not in dispute. My objection is to converting one tradition's account of revelation into a universal test of intellectual or moral legitimacy. **An argument deserves examination because of its evidence and reasoning, not because its author belongs to the victorious religion.**

Christian institutions also punished dissent. Michael Servetus was burned for heresy in Geneva in 1553; Giordano Bruno was executed in Rome in 1600; Galileo was tried by the Roman Inquisition in 1633. These cases were not identical, but each makes the danger of disciplinary religious power unmistakable. **Truth does not need a prison to defend itself.**

Columbus Did Not Discover an Empty America

In 1492, Columbus arrived in a Caribbean world already inhabited by peoples with their own governments, languages, religions, economies, and histories. He did not discover an unoccupied continent. The people he encountered did not need European recognition to exist.

Colonial conquest brought slavery, forced labor, killings, displacement, and disease. A 2019 scholarly synthesis estimated approximately **60.5 million Indigenous people** in the Americas before European arrival, with a roughly **90 percent population decline** over the following century. These are research estimates, not an exact census. Epidemics introduced through European contact caused a major share of mortality. Colonial exploitation, starvation, warfare, and forced movement compounded the disaster.

The scale must be spoken plainly: **the European conquest was followed by a catastrophic destruction of Indigenous lives and societies.** Calling the continent Christian after that catastrophe does not establish the truth of the conquerors' religion.

Columbus, Attack Dogs, and the Killing of Indigenous People

The violence was not merely an unintended consequence of contact. In March 1495, Columbus marched against Indigenous resistance on Hispaniola with approximately 200 infantry, twenty mounted men, twenty dogs, and Indigenous allies, according to historical accounts examined in modern scholarship. The dogs were weapons of intimidation and war.

Bartolomé de las Casas, a Spanish Dominican friar and later bishop, described horrifying Spanish atrocities in the Caribbean and elsewhere, including killings of children and the use of dogs against Indigenous people. Such accounts must be read with the usual care due eyewitness testimony, retrospective reporting, and polemical writing. But the use of attack dogs by Spanish forces, including those under Columbus, is historically documented.

I will not manufacture a specific claim that Columbus personally ordered children fed to dogs unless a reliable source establishes it. The documented violence is already damning. Men who called themselves Christian used trained animals against human beings resisting conquest; other accounts from the period describe the murder of infants.

What crime had an Indigenous child committed by being born outside Christianity? What moral authority permits a conqueror to call his domination salvation?

Las Casas himself condemned these acts on Christian moral grounds. That matters: the surviving denunciations are not only accusations from Christianity's opponents. Some came from Christians who witnessed or investigated the brutality of Christian conquerors.

Attack dogs are not missionaries. A massacre is not an argument. Military victory is not a theological proof.

The 1513 Requerimiento: Accept Our Authority or Face War

In 1513, the Spanish Crown adopted the *Requerimiento*, a proclamation asserting that God had entrusted authority to Saint Peter, that this authority passed to the pope, and that the pope had granted the Spanish monarchs rights over lands inhabited by Indigenous peoples. It ordered those peoples to recognize the authority of Church and Crown and permit Christian instruction. Refusal could be met with warfare, enslavement, seizure of property, and other punishments.

The proclamation was sometimes read in Spanish or Latin to people who could not understand it. The absurdity is breathtaking: a distant religious institution claimed the right to dispose of territories whose inhabitants had never consented to its authority.

Who gave a European pope title to the Americas? What evidence proved that he could grant other peoples' homelands to Spanish kings? Why should an Indigenous community lose sovereignty because it refused to recognize a Christian religious claim?

A pope's declaration is not a land deed. A claim to revelation is not consent. A threatened war is not a theological demonstration.

The Spanish invasion of the Americas was propelled by wealth, land, labor, dynastic power, and religion. Not every killing was committed to obtain a baptism. But Christian authority was explicitly used to

justify dispossession. The *Requerimiento* is not a modern accusation; it is the historical document itself.

The California Missions: Conversion With Guards and Punishment

Beginning in 1769, Spanish colonial authorities and Franciscan missionaries established missions in California to spread Catholic Christianity and extend imperial rule. Indigenous Californians were subjected in many missions to compulsory labor, restrictions on movement, harsh discipline, and punishment for attempting to escape. Disease and overcrowding contributed to mass mortality.

Some conversions involved sincere religious conviction. That does not erase the coercive system in which many Indigenous people lived. A baptized person pursued and punished for leaving a mission has not been granted freedom of religion.

A religion enforced by confinement is not merely being offered. A system that punishes escape cannot claim that every convert entered freely.

The Trail of Tears: The Removal of a People

In 1830, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act. The United States pursued removal of Indigenous peoples from the southeastern states so that settlers could take their lands. The Cherokee challenged dispossession through legal and political means. In 1838, federal troops and militia forced more than 16,000 Cherokee from their homelands in Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, and North Carolina. Families were rounded up, property was lost, and people endured camps and a deadly westward journey.

Approximately **4,000 Cherokee died** in connection with forced removal, according to commonly cited historical estimates.

The federal government did not undertake the Trail of Tears principally as a forced-baptism campaign. Its purpose was territorial removal and settler expansion. Many Cherokee were already Christians, and some Christian missionaries opposed removal. These facts sharpen the indictment of American dispossession: **even converting to Christianity did not protect Indigenous peoples from the government of a predominantly Christian nation.**

Why were their property, homes, treaties, and lives subordinated to the desires of settlers? Did their Christianity make them equal members of the political community? When the government forced them out, the answer was written in the suffering of their families.

The Trail of Tears was not an unfortunate walk west. It was a coerced expulsion that killed thousands. Call it what the record shows: dispossession enforced by the state.

The Boarding Schools: Destroying a People's Cultural Inheritance

The assault on Indigenous life did not end with territorial removal. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the federal government financed and supported schools that separated Indigenous children from their families to force assimilation. Children were forbidden to use their languages, stripped of cultural practices, and frequently exposed to physical punishment and abuse. Religious organizations operated a large part of this system, and Christianity was imposed in many schools.

The U.S. Department of the Interior's **2024** investigation identified **417 federal Indian boarding schools** across thirty-seven states or then-territories. It documented **at least 973 child deaths** and **at least 74 marked or unmarked burial sites** at sixty-five school locations. Research also found that **210 of the 417 schools** were operated by religious institutions or organizations. The reported deaths are a documented minimum, not a complete count of every child who died or every cause of death.

This was a system designed to interrupt the transmission of Indigenous cultures. Children could be separated from parents not because they had committed a crime, but because the government wanted to replace their identities with those of the dominant society.

Taking children from their families to extinguish their language and ancestral religion is cultural destruction, not benevolent education.

The word *genocide* has an established legal meaning, including acts committed with intent to destroy a protected group in whole or in part; forcibly transferring children from one group to another is among the acts specified in the Genocide Convention when the required intent is present. Historical scholars debate how that framework applies across particular colonial policies and periods. That is not a reason to hide the demonstrable acts: forced transfer, suppression of identity, deaths, abuse, and institutionalized destruction of cultural continuity.

Canada: Christian-Operated Schools and Cultural Genocide

The violence against Indigenous peoples did not end with nineteenth-century conquest. In Canada, an organized residential-school system continued into the late twentieth century. More than 150,000 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children attended these schools, many removed from their families and subjected to a deliberate project of assimilation. Churches operated much of the system in partnership with the Canadian state. Catholic, Anglican, United Church, and Presbyterian institutions were among the operators.

Children lost years of family life. Many were punished for speaking their languages or practicing inherited customs. Survivors testified to physical and sexual abuse, neglect, malnutrition, and humiliating discipline. Thousands of children died; the full number remains uncertain as records and burial sites continue to be investigated. The last federally run school closed in 1996.

In 2015 Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission called the residential-school system **cultural genocide**. Those words name an organized attack on the transmission of Indigenous languages, identities, and collective life. They are not a metaphor introduced to make an essay dramatic. They reflect an official historical finding.

What did these children do to deserve removal from their parents? Why should the faith of church officials determine whether Indigenous children could speak the language of their grandparents? **The state and churches claimed the authority to remake children by breaking the continuity of their civilizations.** That is the central crime of the system, alongside the specific abuses and preventable deaths documented by its survivors and investigators.

A church's promise of salvation cannot cancel a child's right to family, language, and dignity. Calling forced assimilation an educational mission does not change its character. **An institution does not become innocent because its violence was conducted under the name of religion.**

A Christian Population Does Not Prove an Educated Theological Choice

The thirteen colonies had approximately two and a half million inhabitants at independence, including hundreds of thousands of enslaved people. They were not a single congregation, nor did they share a single level of education, religious belief, or access to scholarship. Some were well read; many inherited religious identities through family, institutions, and law.

How many colonists had studied the philosophical traditions of India and China? How many could compare Christianity with Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, or other traditions? We have no reliable statistical answer. That is precisely why inherited religious affiliation cannot be passed off as proof of a fully informed comparison of world philosophies.

And even if every colonist had been a learned theologian, one question would remain: **what right would the religious majority of 1776 have to impose a creed on every American yet to be born?**

The Constitution provides a political structure that can be debated and amended. It does not freeze one generation's theological commitments into permanent qualifications for public power.

The Exclusive God and the Problem of Political Authority

I am not claiming that warfare, cruelty, or intolerance first appeared with the Abrahamic religions. That would be bad history. My accusation is more specific and more serious: **exclusive revelation can be turned into a claim of universal jurisdiction over people who have never accepted the revelation.** In the hands of a coercive state, the assertion that there is one true God and one uniquely authorized path to truth or salvation can become a political weapon.

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam differ profoundly in their teachings and historical institutions; they cannot be collapsed into a single identical system. But each has traditions claiming that a distinctive revelation carries divine authority. Certain forms of Christianity and Islam have historically made religious allegiance a matter of public power and, in specific periods, justified the suppression of rivals. The evidence is not merely theological speculation. It lies in baptism laws in Saxony, Christian imperial restrictions on ancestral rites, crusading conquest, Spanish assertions of papal authority over Indigenous American lands, and state-supported religious assimilation.

Here is the philosophical question. Why must a Greek, a Saxon, a Cherokee, a Hindu, a Buddhist, or a Jain accept as binding an alleged revelation delivered to someone else in a distant place and time? A

sacred text may be authoritative to its believers. **Its authority over nonbelievers cannot be established simply by citing the text itself.**

There is a related conceptual inconsistency in some polemics against other religions. Are the objects of another people's worship nonexistent inventions, or are they actual demonic powers? Those are different propositions. A theologian can offer a theory explaining the difference between an idol and a demon, but cannot treat both assertions as self-evident substitutes for evidence. Calling someone else's gods imaginary does not prove they are imaginary. Calling them demonic does not prove they are demons.

These problems do not imply that all members of Abrahamic religions endorse persecution. Many have fought it. Nor do they mean that every form of exclusive belief leads to violence. **The decisive moral and political crossing occurs when a belief claimed as uniquely true is transformed into an entitlement to command, dispossess, punish, or erase other people.**

A claim to speak for God is not proof that God has spoken. And a claim to possess exclusive truth is not a warrant to govern humanity without its consent.

Hindu Civilization Is Not an Abrahamic Church

Hinduism is not adequately understood as one more creed organized like an Abrahamic church. It is a civilizational complex with diverse philosophies, practices, texts, schools, and long histories of disagreement. Nyaya philosophers developed theories of valid knowledge; Samkhya analyzed reality without relying on a creator God; Vedanta schools disagreed sharply about ultimate reality; Buddhist and Jain traditions challenged Vedic authority and developed independent disciplines of reasoning. These are not minor denominational disagreements inside one compulsory confession.

This diversity does not prove that Indic history was free of persecution, caste oppression, sectarian hostility, or political violence. It does defeat the assumption that all civilizations must be judged by the model of one exclusive revelation binding every human being. Hindu rulers fought wars; such wars should be examined by their actual causes, rather than automatically redescribed as campaigns to impose a single universal savior or prophet.

My criticism is aimed at a particular claim: that a civilization becomes spiritually or morally deficient because its members decline to accept a revelation they did not produce, cannot independently verify, and never consented to treat as political law. **No civilization owes its freedom of conscience to an alien claim of divine monopoly.**

Fifty Thousand Denominations? The Number Is Not the Point

Very large counts of Christian denominations are often quoted, sometimes approaching 50,000 worldwide. Such figures depend on how churches, national organizations, and denominational branches are classified. They must not be confused with fifty thousand entirely distinct Protestant theologies.

The exact count is beside the constitutional point. Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Christians, Baptists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Methodists, Pentecostals, and other communities disagree over authority, sacraments, salvation, church government, and doctrine.

If the United States declares itself officially Christian, which Christianity does the state enforce? Does Congress select the interpretation? Does the president? Does the Supreme Court? What happens to Christians who reject the government's choice?

A Christian government cannot abolish Christian disagreement. It can arm one side of that disagreement with the power of the state.

James Madison Understood the Danger

In 1785, James Madison opposed a Virginia proposal for public support of teachers of Christianity. In his *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*, he warned that the authority to establish Christianity could become the authority to establish one Christian sect over another.

This was not a warning written by someone ignorant of American founding debates. It was an argument made by one of the central architects of the Constitution.

The government that can privilege Christianity over other religions can privilege Baptists over Catholics, Presbyterians over Pentecostals, or some future majority over today's favored church.

The state that can establish your religion can also establish your rival's religion.

That is why a prohibition on national religious establishment protects Christians as well as non-Christians. It prevents the federal government from becoming a theological tribunal.

A Christian State Is Not Required for Christianity to Survive

In Pew Research Center's 2023–2024 Religious Landscape Study, **62 percent of American adults** identified as Christian. Protestant Americans were approximately 40 percent of adults; Catholics about 19 percent. Despite the absence of an established national church, Christianity remains deeply influential.

Christians can build churches, teach their children, publish books, conduct missionary work, and practice their convictions. The federal Constitution does not demand that they renounce their religion. It refuses to make their profession of belief the government's official test of citizenship or federal officeholding.

Establishing a national Christian church could place rival Christian groups in direct competition for the machinery of government. The danger is not imaginary: European history contains wars and persecutions in which religious divisions mixed with dynastic ambition, territory, and political power.

A shared Christian identity did not prevent Christian nations from fighting each other. Why pretend it would guarantee harmony in America?

The French, English, Germans, Russians, and others fought devastating wars despite long Christian histories. European

antisemitism produced centuries of exclusion and violence; Nazi genocide against Jews had its own modern racial ideology and cannot simply be described as a church conversion campaign. Yet the long history of Christian anti-Judaism remains an essential part of Europe's moral reckoning.

Religion is no substitute for constitutional restraints on power.

Opposing Christian Establishment Is Not Endorsing Every Liberal Policy

Defending a nonsectarian Constitution does not require me to endorse every contemporary liberal position. Nor does disagreement with Christian nationalism prove allegiance to Marxism. Classical Marxism concerns class, property, labor, production, and historical development; modern American liberalism largely works within capitalism. They are not interchangeable intellectual systems.

I can disagree with modern liberalism and still refuse a Christian state. I can criticize authoritarian governments of every ideological persuasion while defending freedom of conscience.

The alternatives are not Christian theocracy or unconditional acceptance of every liberal policy. That is a false choice.

The Constitution Is Not a Theological Court

The Constitution does not need to determine whether Jesus saves humanity. It does not need to settle disputes between Protestants and Catholics or between Christianity and Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Jewish, Islamic, or nonreligious philosophies.

It establishes institutions, allocates and limits powers, provides procedures for lawmaking, and permits amendment. It is not a theological textbook.

It does not have to prove Christianity false in order to refrain from establishing Christianity. Citizens remain free to argue that one religion is true and another mistaken. What they cannot derive from demographic dominance is an automatic right to turn their creed into a federal qualification for political authority.

The Constitution exists to govern a political community, not to determine who possesses the one true God.

Conclusion: The Constitution Is Not a Religious Conquest

Charlie Kirk was right that Christianity influenced colonial America. His references to colonial religious tests, Christian founders, and the religious language of the Declaration point to genuine features of the historical record. Yet he blurred the distinction those facts cannot erase: **Christian historical influence is not Christian constitutional establishment.**

The law itself answers him. The framers barred religious tests for federal office. The First Amendment barred congressional establishment. Madison opposed compulsory public support for Christian teachers. Jefferson's Virginia statute defended freedom of conscience. In 1797, an American-ratified treaty's English text expressly described the government as not founded on the Christian religion. None of these documents requires denying America's Christian inheritance. They require refusing to confuse it with legal supremacy.

And that refusal matters because the record of Christian political supremacy is not an abstraction. The Saxon baptism laws imposed death for refusing Christianity. Christian imperial legislation suppressed ancestral worship. Crusading campaigns subordinated European peoples. Conquistadors used violence and religious authority to subjugate Indigenous nations. The *Requerimiento* asserted papal and

royal jurisdiction over civilizations that never consented to either. In North America, Indigenous peoples endured forced removal and generations of compulsory assimilation, including church-operated schools in the United States and Canada. These histories have different causes; not every killing was a religious killing, and not every Christian defended these policies. But they expose the catastrophe that can follow when power claims a sacred entitlement to rule others.

I reject the proposition that exclusive revelation grants any church, state, monarch, or preacher a jurisdiction over all humanity. A theological claim requires argument. It does not become law because the majority accepts it. The fact that a conqueror's faith survived does not make its claims true. The fact that a people were defeated does not make their ancestral convictions false.

A baptism forced at swordpoint is not conviction. A civilization destroyed in the name of salvation is not evidence for the savior. A Christian majority is not a Christian constitution.

Americans may be Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Zoroastrians, adherents of Indigenous traditions, atheists, or agnostics. Their citizenship and eligibility to serve the republic do not depend on accepting Protestant theology. The Constitution governs a political community. It does not adjudicate which God, scripture, revelation, or prophet is ultimately true.

Charlie Kirk's death does not settle his argument. Neither does his conviction. **The words of the Constitution, not the theology of its**

interpreters, determine what kind of federal government the founders established.

Sources and documentation

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Editorial documentation note: This essay explicitly distinguishes documented events from disputed historical numbers and does not assert that Columbus personally fed children to dogs; the historical record independently establishes Columbus's use of attack dogs and other reported atrocities against Indigenous people. The term "cultural genocide" follows the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission's description of the residential-school system; distinct episodes of mass killing, forced

conversion, and dispossession are not presumed to carry identical legal classifications.