

The Danger of the Confluence of Democracy and Christianity

Augustin Tchamba

Theological Seminary, Adventist University of Africa, Ongata, Rongai, Kenya

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.910000486>

Received: 24 October 2025; Accepted: 30 October 2025; Published: 17 November 2025

ABSTRACT

Christianity and democracy are two of the most significant forces shaping human civilization. Yet, their convergence can also generate profound dangers, potentially eroding state secularism and undermining the principle of equal rights. This article examines the complex interaction between these two traditions, arguing that the contemporary fusion of Christianity and democratic politics—what I call the new fusionism—risks producing exclusion and polarization rather than harmony. Historically intertwined, this relationship has evolved into a deeper entanglement, leading to greater interference of religious norms in public life and the marginalization of minority groups within democratic processes. Furthermore, the political manipulation of Christian ideas—such as invoking religious rhetoric to justify discriminatory policies or mobilize sectarian constituencies—intensifies social divisions and weakens democratic institutions. Drawing on critical analysis and case studies, this paper contends that, while cooperation between Christianity and democracy can enrich public life, it also carries the potential for intolerance and radicalization. Ultimately, the argument calls for a renewed commitment to a secular and inclusive civic sphere, where democracy safeguards the dignity and representation of all people without privileging any faith.

Keywords: Christianity and Democracy, equal rights, Laws and policies, Christian Values, Voter Suppression.

INTRODUCTION

Christianity and democracy are two pillars that have most significantly shaped human society. Democracy as a system of governance is characterized by the principles of equality, freedom, and representation, wherein all citizens take an active role in shaping their shared destiny.¹ Christianity, as one of the biggest religions in the world, has profound cultural, moral, and ethical influences on individuals and societies. While both have contributed to creating contemporary societies, their union raises important questions regarding the interaction between religious domination and secular authority.²

The central thesis of this paper is to underscore the potential risks that emerge when Christianity and democracy converge. While their historical entwining has shaped our societies, this union also raises critical questions about the balance between religious dominance and secular authority. When religious values begin to dominate political institutions, they can undermine state secularism and equal rights,³ particularly for minority groups. This fusion threatens to erode the foundation of inclusiveness and justice on which democracy thrives, a concern that warrants our close scrutiny.

State secularism, which is the guardian of keeping religion separate from the state, is the pillar of democratic culture. State secularism ensures that no single religious group has political domination under the majority rule,

¹Ketcham, R. (2021). The idea of democracy in the modern era. University Press of Kansas.

<https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=YXSrEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=.+Democracy+as+a+system+of+governance+is+characterized+by+the+principles+of+equality,+freedom,+and+representation,+wherein+all+citizens+take+an+active+role+in+shaping+their+shared+destiny&ots=zVlrWVxrQv&sig=8fO-aORtEvz-EUwwHb5w16Hq93U>

² Taylor, Charles. A Secular Age. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007, 512-513.

³Casanova, José. Public Religions in the Modern World. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp. 215–242.

guaranteeing all citizens' rights, irrespective of their religion. Equal rights, the other democratic principle, ensures that all people are equal and have equal chances and representation. However, when democracy and Christianity converge too closely, those values become vulnerable to being undermined, and this generates exclusion, discrimination, and marginalization of non-Christian communities.⁴

In the subsequent sections, this paper will delve into the historical relationship between Christianity and democracy, critique the role of religion in lawmaking, and comment on the political exploitation of religious rhetoric. Through this critical examination, the paper aims to underscore the potential danger of this nexus. It also calls for an urgent revival of secular and inclusive civic activism, emphasizing the need to uphold democracy as a system that respects and serves everyone.

Historical Context

The historical connection between Christianity and democracy runs deep, significantly influencing the formation of Western society over centuries. To fully comprehend the potential perils of their merging, it is crucial to study how these two have interacted across history and the long-term societal effects of their convergence. This historical perspective is of utmost importance in our understanding of the topic.

Examination of the Historical Relationship between Democracy and Christianity

The origin of democracy can be traced as far back as ancient Greece, where citizen participation in the administration of the country first became conceived. However, contemporary democracy, as we understand it today, had an enormous debt paid to Christian doctrine during the Enlightenment and Reformation. Christianity and Protestantism helped develop notions of individual freedom, equality, and moral responsibility on which democratic theory would later find itself. For example, the 16th-century Protestant Reformation challenged the authority of the Catholic Church. It emphasized the importance of individual conscience, thereby indirectly fostering a culture of challenging authority and encouraging personal freedoms.⁵

Similarly, the Enlightenment thinkers of the 17th and 18th centuries, mostly Christian ethics-influenced, espoused the ideals of reason, human rights, and church-state separation.⁶ These values were the foundation for modern democratic institutions, particularly in Europe and North America. The American Constitution, to take one case, is such a balance of Christian moralities and the non-Christian values of the state as to ensure religious freedom without constituting a state religion.

Analysis of Key Events Illustrating Their Mingling

Throughout history, there have been various instances where democracy and Christianity intersected, with most having a significant effect. One of the best examples is how Christian movements helped abolish slavery during the 19th century.⁷ Christian abolitionists in both the United States and the United Kingdom used religious rhetoric to make it a moral imperative to abolish slavery, showing how Christian ethics could have a positive influence on democratic reforms.

⁴Rosenblum, N. L. (2021). Obligations of citizenship and demands of faith: Religious accommodation in pluralist democracies.

<https://www.torrossa.com/gs/resourceProxy?an=5641941&publisher=FZO137>

⁵McGrath, A. E. (2008). The intellectual origins of the European Reformation. John Wiley & Sons.

https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=Nxl8V_aAvpAC&oi=fnd&pg=PR5&dq=the+16th-century+Protestant+Reformation+challenged+the+authority+of+the+Catholic+Church+and+emphasized+the+importance+of+individual+conscience,+thereby+indirectly+fostering+a+culture+of+challenging+authority+and+encouraging+personal+freedoms.&ots=x85BS4W3dn&sig=qWzMTeHfOiQY-pd9St0Nt3oSohY

⁶Skinner, Quentin. The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Vol. 2: The Age of Reformation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp. 250–277.

⁷Martin, Dale. B. (2021). Slavery as salvation: The metaphor of slavery in Pauline Christianity. Wipf and Stock Publishers.

<https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=pkEpEAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=One+of+the+best+examples+is+how+Christian+movements+helped+abolish+slavery+during+the+19th+century&ots=7u3TePb05W&sig=s7nbww3dGYNuNOIjgHSFc80tODQ>

There are even examples where the blend of Christianity with democracy led to exclusion and discrimination. Religious policies in America, for instance, were on the rise in the early 20th century, such as prohibition and banning the sale of alcohol based on Christian campaigns for temperance. The policies were possibly implemented democratically, but led to the exclusion of individuals who were not of the same religion, such as immigrant communities that were different in religious practice.

Long-Term Societal Impacts of This Conflation

The previous encounter of Christianity and democracy has profoundly affected society's institutions and conventions. Positively, Christian morals have been at the core of instilling the concept of the establishment of social welfare systems, charities, and the fight for justice and equality. For example, the early United States Civil Rights Movement was primarily shaped by Christian morals, with writers like Martin Luther King Jr. invoking religious language to advocate for racial equality and democratic rights.

On the other hand, the intersection of Christianity with democracy has also helped to sideline non-Christian populations and undermine secular values. The majority of Christian people have conventionally dominated both political and cultural space in all democracies, typically at the expense of religious minorities. That has produced an impact of policies and practices favoring Christian values, such as Sunday closing regulations or bans on non-Christian religious practice, undercutting the ideal of pluralism in democracy.⁸

Influence of Religion in Legislation

The place of religion, and more so Christianity, in legislating is a central theme at the nexus of Christianity and democracy. Democratic governments are in place to advocate for what the people want, but incorporating the ethics of religion into lawmaking can result in laws that include the moral and ethical worldview of specific religious communities. This is detailed in the subsequent sections below.

Discussion of How Christian Values Influence Laws and Policies

Christian values have long been a source of guidance for legislation, particularly in Christian-majority countries. These values also often steer the debate on moral and ethical issues, such as abortion, marriage, education, and social welfare.⁹ For example, the majority of abortion restriction acts in the United States have been formulated based on Christian principles regarding the sacredness of life¹⁰. Similarly, opposition to same-sex marriage has generally been framed in religious terms, with the Christian doctrine of marriage being between a man and a woman being invoked by opponents.

Christian values have sometimes brought favorable legislative policies, such as legislation promoting social justice, alms, and human dignity. For instance, the abolition of slavery and the American Civil Rights Movement drew strength from Christian ethics, emphasizing equality and every individual's inherent dignity. However, the impacts of Christian values on legislation are not always harmless. As soon as religion controls the legislating process more than anything else, it leads to the exclusion of minority views, along with imposing a particular set of morals on the whole population.

Case Studies Showcasing the Enactment of Religiously Motivated Legislation

A few case studies illustrate how religiously motivated legislation can affect society. One of the most prominent examples is the implementation of "Blue Laws" in the United States, which ban some Sunday activities in

⁸Micklethwait, John, and Adrian Wooldridge. *God Is Back: How the Global Revival of Faith Is Changing the World*. New York: Penguin Press, 2009, pp. 202–231.

⁹Kaczor, Christopher. *The Ethics of Abortion: Women's Rights, Human Life, and the Question of Justice*. New York: Routledge, 2022, pp. 56–83; Audi, Robert. *Democratic Authority and the Separation of Church and State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 45–68.

¹⁰Kaczor, Christopher. *The Ethics of Abortion: Women's Rights, Human Life, and the Question of Justice*. New York: Routledge, 2022, 56–83.

compliance with Christian Sabbath observance.¹¹ Although more common historically, they are operative in some states, and the laws demonstrate Christian impacts on public policy. Although they can conform to the religion of Christian societies, they are likely to inconvenience or disadvantage those who belong to other religious practices and beliefs, such as non-Christian religious groups or secular individuals.¹²

For instance, the struggle for LGBTQ+ rights, especially in very Christian-dominated countries. Around the world, same-sex marriage, same-sex adoption rights, or protection from anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination are being curtailed in their legality because of Christian reasons. For instance, in Uganda, Christian leaders pushed for the enactment of draconian anti-homosexuality laws on the basis that these were required to uphold "Christian morality." The laws have, subsequently, been devastating for LGBTQ+ individuals, including increased discrimination, violence, and social exclusion.

In the US, too, it is possible to observe the influence of Christianity in educational policy. For example, school board controversies regarding evolution, creationism, or intelligent design taught in public schools typically reflect the confrontation between religious morality and scientific rationality. There have been efforts in different states to pass bills requiring the teaching of creationism or intelligent design alongside evolution, despite court rulings finding that such action violates the church-state separation. These efforts show the ongoing struggle to balance religious beliefs and the secular character of public schools.

Consequences for Minority Communities and Secular Populations

The influence of Christian principles on law has significant implications for minority groups and secular communities. Legislation that takes account of the ethical opinions of a majority religious community will, in effect, overlook the divergent opinions and interests of all members of society. This can lead to the exclusion of religious minorities, such as Muslims, Jews, Hindus, or atheists, whose practice or belief is incompatible with the prevailing legal order. For example, Christian holidays or practices preferences, such as Christmas or school prayer, can be utilized to induce feelings of exclusion or alienation among non-Christian students.¹³ Similarly, legislation that restricts reproductive liberty or LGBTQ+ liberty according to Christian beliefs can disproportionately injure individuals who do not share such convictions, limiting their freedom and prospects.

Additionally, religious influence on legislation can harm the state's secularism principle, which is crucial to guaranteeing that the democratic system is equitable and inclusive. When religious considerations overshadow the legislation process, they can end up devastating the church-state separation and result in a government leaning towards one religion at the expense of others. Not only does this violate minorities' rights, but it also eliminates democratic institutions by establishing apparent discrimination and disproportionality.

Exclusion of Minority Communities

Christianity and democracy's alignment, while syncretic in presentation, can disenfranchise minority communities from access to democratic representation. The disenfranchisement is expressed in various ways, including voter disenfranchisement, asymmetrical representation, and exclusion of non-Christian communities.¹⁴

¹¹Robbins, I. P. (2022). The Obsolescence of Blue Laws in the 21st Century. *Stan. L. & Pol'y Rev.*, 33, 289.
https://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3203&context=facsch_lawrev

¹²Philpott, Daniel. *Religious Freedom in Islam: The Fate of a Universal Human Right in the Muslim World Today*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 176–199.

¹³Maples, G. W. (2023). *Student religious accommodation policies and non-Christian college student perceptions of institutional support: A mixed methods dissertation*. North Carolina State University.
<https://search.proquest.com/openview/763a858b9416df856c0bc01db549db10/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>

¹⁴ Perreau-Saussine, E. (2023). *Catholicism and democracy: An essay in the history of political thought*. Princeton University Press.
https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=IsyZEAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=The+convergence+of+Christianity+and+democracy,+while+framed+as+a+harmonious+relationship,+can+potentially+disenfranchise+minority+groups+from+full+democratic+participation.+The+disenfranchisement+is+in+various+forms,+including+voter+disenfranchisement,+unequal+representation,+and+exclusion+of+non-Christian+groups&ots=o7ipZACOQ7&sig=N23iCfW_n6dNgLDylMM526XLeiw

The methods of disenfranchising minority communities, the impact on democratic representation and equality, and pragmatic implications for civic engagement and participation are discussed in this section.

Examination of Voter Suppression and Exclusion Tactics Targeting Non-Christian Populations

Voter suppression is the most direct manner in which minority groups, especially non-Christian groups, are disenfranchised from democratic processes.¹⁵ In most democracies, policies and legislation that disproportionately impact minority groups are generally justified on religious or moral grounds. For example, in the United States, voter ID legislation has been blamed for discriminating against minority communities like African Americans and Hispanics who just so happen to be less likely to possess the required identification.¹⁶ The legislation is sometimes advocated for by Christian organizations, who argue that it is not needed to prevent fraud during voting, even after having been shown that the same is very low.

In much the same manner, gerrymandering—manipulating election district lines for political party gain—is practiced routinely via minority voting dilution. In reliance on the situation, such action can be affected by religious ends since elected politicians would desire Christian ideologies' preeminence to be secured in the government. For instance, in those states with strong Christian conservative movements, gerrymandering has been used to craft districts favoring candidates who hold Christian ideologies at their heart, disenfranchising secular or non-Christian voters.

Another strategy is limiting voting access by restricting early voting, polling place closures in minority communities, or voter roll purges. These actions tend to disproportionately impact minority groups, such as non-Christian groups, who might have further obstacles to voting based on socioeconomic status or discrimination.

Impact on Democratic Representation and Equality

Excluding minority groups from the democratic process has significant implications for representation and equality. Where certain groups are deliberately disenfranchised or excluded from participation, the government will not hear their voice.¹⁷ This goes against the democratic idea that all citizens should have an equal voice in deciding their common future. For example, in countries whose political domains are controlled by Christian majorities, policies will reflect the agendas and interests of these communities at the cost of minority groups.¹⁸ This may lead to laws that will promote Christian practice or belief at the expense of others, for example, prayer in school or reproductive restrictions, which are not according to the beliefs of non-Christian or secular communities.

Additionally, the absence of minority representation can lead to cycles of discrimination and inequality. In case minority political participation does not exist, problems such as poverty, educational disparities, and racist social structures that impact these groups in disproportionate manners are more likely not to be addressed. In the long run, it can broaden the majority and minority gaps that can be difficult to address.

¹⁵Larsson, T. (2015). Monkish Politics in Southeast Asia: Religious disenfranchisement in comparative and theoretical perspective. *Modern Asian Studies*, 49(1), 40-82. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/modern-asian-studies/article/monkish-politics-in-southeast-asia-religious-disenfranchisement-in-comparative-and-theoretical-perspective/AFCDDDEBA3E44FED407432EF7E84BBB62>

¹⁶Hajnal, Z., Lajevardi, N., & Nielson, L. (2017). Voter identification laws and the suppression of minority votes. *The Journal of Politics*, 79(2), 363-379. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/688343>

¹⁷Stepan, Alfred. "Religion, Democracy, and the "Twin Tolerations."" *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 4 (2000): pp. 37–57; Mendus, Susan. *Politics and Morality*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009, pp. 60–86.

¹⁸Mahmood, S. (2015). Religious difference in a secular age: A minority report. <https://www.torrossa.com/gs/resourceProxy?an=5563845&publisher=FZO137>

Real-World Implications for Civic Engagement and Participation

Minority group exclusion from democratic participation also has broader consequences for civic engagement and participation. Citizens will not engage in civic activities such as voting, public hearings, or becoming members of a neighborhood organization if they do not think that their views are being listened to or that the government is against them.¹⁹ Civic disengagement can erode the democratic process because it can narrow down the variety of perspectives and thoughts integrated into policymaking.

For example, in discriminatory or exclusionary countries where non-Christian groups are discriminated against, the citizens of such groups have much lower voting percentages than the majority. This decline further weakens not just the legitimacy of democratic structures but also heightens the discrimination against minority groups. With time, this could become a reason for alienation and disenfranchisement among citizens, shattering their confidence even more in democratic institutions. In addition, the exclusion of minority communities leads to social fragmentation and division. When specific communities feel that they are not included or valued within the political process, tensions begin to arise among various communities, and thus, there are increased polarizations and conflicts. This leads to a breakdown of social cohesion necessary for an effective democracy.

Political Manipulation of Religion

The intersection of democracy and Christianity tends to encourage the political manipulation of religion, in which religious discourse and belief are employed to further political agendas.²⁰ Such manipulation can take various forms, from the use of religious discourse in political discourse to the justification of discriminatory policy based on religion. This part describes how religion becomes politicized, leads to cases of discrimination based on religion, and addresses the consequences of mobilizing religious groups on religious grounds for political purposes.²¹

Analysis of the Use of Religious Rhetoric in Political Discourse

Religious rhetoric is an effective political oratory device because it tends to tap into the voters' ethical and moral beliefs.²² Politicians use religious rhetoric as a ploy to address religious groups, especially those nations that have high concentrations of Christian populations. For instance, in the US, politicians typically appeal to their Christianity to gain evangelical voters' support by referencing values like family, morality, and tradition. This can be a highly effective way in which religious voters are mobilized. However, it can have the consequence of alienating non-believing voters and those favoring church-state separation.

Besides, religious language can blur the lines between religion and politics because specific policies will be thought to be guided by God or morally elevated. This is likely to lead to the exclusion of other voices and the marginalization of secular or non-Christian voices. For instance, arguments against such practices as gay marriage or abortion are framed in religious terms, with Christians quoting scripture to justify restricting policy. This politicizes the debate and distorts the pluralistic ethos of democracy, whereby varying perspectives must be accommodated and weighed.

¹⁹Fung, A. (2015). Putting the public back into governance: The challenges of citizen participation and its future. *Public administration review*, 75(4), 513-522. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/puar.12361>

²⁰Smith, C. (2014). *Disruptive religion: The force of faith in social movement activism*. Routledge. <https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/books/mono/download?identifierName=doi&identifierValue=10.4324/9781315022147&type=googlepdf>

²¹Gorski, Philip S., and Samuel L. Perry. *The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022, pp. 33–59.

²²Bitzer, L. F. (2020). Political rhetoric. In *Landmark essays on contemporary rhetoric* (pp. 1-22). Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003059226-1/political-rhetoric-lloyd-bitzer>

Examples of Discriminatory Policies Justified by Religious Beliefs

Numerous examples of discriminatory policies have been justified on religious grounds. One such well-known example is the global controversy over LGBTQ+ rights. In the majority of countries, laws restricting same-sex marriage, same-sex couple adoption rights, or anti-discrimination protections for LGBTQ+ individuals have been supported by Christian politicians and clergy who argue that such laws are necessary to defend "traditional family values" or "Christian morality."²³

A second example is restricting reproductive rights, such as the right to an abortion, in the vast majority of states dominated by Christian values. Within the US, for example, multiple states have recently passed bills rigorously limiting or banning abortion by appealing to Christian perspectives about preserving life. All such measures significantly disadvantage women, particularly minority and low-income women, who are often forced into significant challenges trying to secure reproductive care.

Similarly, in some countries, religious explanations have been used to justify discriminatory policies against religious minorities. For example, in India, Hindu nationalism has led to policies of exclusion of Muslim and Christian groups, often justified by appeal to the principles of the majority faith. This has been responsible for increased violence and discrimination against religious minorities, eroding the values of equality and religious freedom.

Effects of Mobilizing Religious Groups for Political Gain

Religious community mobilization can have a significant impact on society and democracy as a whole. On the one hand, it can empower religious communities to become more politically engaged, as in the Christian rights movement in the United States during the 1980s. The movement mobilized evangelical Christians to the polls to vote for politicians whose values reflected their own, leading to sensational shifts in political power and policy.

However, religious group mobilization for political purposes can also become a reason for increased polarization and fragmentation of society.²⁴ Political rhetoric appealing to spiritual faith to appeal to a particular segment brings about an "us versus them" attitude in the ascendant, which sees anybody who does not share that belief as an outsider or enemy. This can be used to fuel social tensions and lead to the marginalization of minority groups, as seen in the rise of Islamophobia in Western countries following the 9/11 attacks.

Also, the politicization of religion may de-legitimize democratic institutions. When religious groups are seen to wield disproportionate political power, this compromises faith in the neutrality and integrity of the democratic process. This is particularly objectionable in plural societies, where the interests of religious minorities and secular citizens must also be represented.

Radicalization and Division

Although at times considered a source of moral leadership, the combination of Christianity and democracy can also lead to the polarization and radicalization of society. When religious beliefs become irrevocably tied to political ideologies, they tend to create an environment where disagreements are not only discussed but demonized.²⁵ This section explores how the combination of democracy and Christianity creates societal polarization and contributes to radicalizing political ideologies.

²³Kondakov, A. (2021). The influence of the 'gay-propaganda' law on violence against LGBTIQ people in Russia: Evidence from criminal court rulings. *European journal of criminology*, 18(6), 940-959.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1477370819887511>

²⁴McCoy, J., Rahman, T., & Somer, M. (2018). Polarization and the global crisis of democracy: Common patterns, dynamics, and pernicious consequences for democratic polities. *American behavioral scientist*, 62(1), 16-42.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0002764218759576>

²⁵Perry, Samuel L. 'Christian Nationalism and Polarization in American Politics.' *Sociology of Religion* 83, no. 1 (2022): pp. 1–25.

Exploration of How the Confluence Breeds Societal Divisions

Embedding Christian principles within democratic systems can potentially divide society, particularly in plural societies with different religious and secular positions. Political movements and politicians who take on Christian ideologies closely risk excluding others who do not embrace the same worldview. For example, in the US, the rise of the Christian right has tended to polarize political life, where issues like abortion, gay rights, and education are framed as moral battles between "good" and "evil" (Perry, 2022). This binary thinking leaves little room for compromise or debate, fueling societal polarization.

In addition, religious discourse used in political contexts has the potential to ignite religious vs. cultural group tensions. An example is how the increased influence in Europe by Christian nationalist movements created increased anti-immigrant feelings with a focus on Muslim communities. Such movements will tend to appeal to religious frames of argument with the presentation that they are advocates of "Christian civilization," which is under siege by other religious groups. This not only generates hostility against minority groups but also dissolves social cohesion through the development of an "us versus them" culture.

Discussion on the Radicalization of Political Ideologies

The identification of Christianity with democracy is also a source of political radicalization. When religion is used to justify radical political positions, it can result in radical movements that feel their cause is God's will. Christian radicals have, in some cases, used religious language to justify violence or discrimination against others, for example, violence against abortion clinics or discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals.²⁶ These laws are always framed in defense of "Christian values." However, they manage to undermine the values of democracy, which are founded on tolerance, dialogue, and settling disputes through peace.

Second, the political radicalization of ideologies can erode democratic institutions and norms. Political leaders employing religious fanaticism as a catchphrase may replace ideological purity with democratic values of compromise, inclusivity, and toleration of minority rights. This can result in policies of isolation of certain groups, suppression of opposition, and erosion of checks and balances vital to an effective democracy.

Counteracting Potential Dangers

While the conjunction of Christianity and democracy poses grave threats, there are also possibilities of reversing these threats and fostering a less threatening and more inclusive rapport between religion and the state. The sections below explore this in detail.

Presentation of "New Fusionism" and Its Implications

"New fusionism" is a new school of thought that attempts to balance the moral values of Christianity and democracy without compromising one for the other.²⁷ Unlike classical fusionism, where political conservatism usually accorded much emphasis in debate, new fusionism is based on respect and cooperation between religious and secular thought. This case views democracy and Christianity as having much to contribute to society but holds that neither needs to do so at the cost of equality, inclusiveness, and state secularism.

For example, new fusionism welcomes religious communities to be civically engaged in the interests of the common good, human rights, and social justice, but in a manner that is attentive to the pluralistic nature of democratic societies.²⁸ That could involve Christian congregations mobilizing around policy campaigns for

²⁶Westwood, S. (2022). Can religious social workers practice affirmatively with LGBTQ+ clients? Exploring the impact of beliefs on practice. *British Journal of Social Work*, 52(1), 162-179. <https://academic.oup.com/bjsw/article-abstract/52/1/162/6253507>

²⁷Dueck, A. C. *The Recovery of the Moral Tradition: The New Fusionism in Christian Political Thought*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018, pp. 91-120.

²⁸Kim, S. M., Banawiratma, J. B., & Sofjan, D. (2020). Religious pluralism discourse in public sphere of Indonesia: A critical application of communicative action theory to inter-religious dialogue. *Religió Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama*, 10(2), 158-188. <https://jurnalufu.uinsa.ac.id/index.php/religio/article/view/1307>

poverty, climate change, or racial justice, all within the context of promoting more universal democratic objectives rather than narrowly religious imperatives. New fusion can mend religious and secular society by emphasizing what is shared across humanity, such as compassion and dignity, thus promoting a more pluralistic and reconciliatory political culture.

The concept of “new fusionism” highlights the strategic coordination among advocacy groups, legal actors, and lawmakers in contemporary politics, particularly influenced by Christian values. The Dobbs decision, which overturned *Roe v. Wade*, exemplifies this, as over half of the amicus briefs for this outcome were linked to conservative Christian networks. This illustrates the blend of religious beliefs with political strategy, leading to swift legislative actions, such as restrictive abortion laws in several states. Furthermore, organized evangelical efforts have significantly influenced Republican coalitions, with high voter turnout and religious endorsements becoming central to campaign strategies. The phenomenon is not limited to the U.S.; Brazil’s evangelical networks also played a crucial role in Jair Bolsonaro’s electoral success, demonstrating that faith-driven political fusion can be replicated across different democracies. However, the most significant aspect is the growing trend in which theology influences legal and political outcomes, reflecting the evolving nature of politics.

Strategies for Promoting a Cooperative but Cautious Relationship between Democracy and Christianity

Certain precautions can be taken to counter the potential dangers of the convergence of democracy and Christianity. First, the rule of state secularism has to be reaffirmed, which ensures that no religion dictates the political process.²⁹ This includes keeping the state and church distinct, with religious beliefs informing personal moral choices but not public policy. For instance, laws must be based on broad concepts of justice and equity rather than on religious dogma so that justice can be accorded to all citizens regardless of religion.

Second, political leaders and policymakers should not use religious language to justify discriminatory or exclusionary policies. Instead, they should ground their arguments in the shared democratic principles of freedom, equality, and human rights. This ensures that everyone is included and reduces polarization by appealing to shared purposes rather than religious divisions.

Thirdly, education is key in mediating a healthy coexistence between democracy and Christianity. Education in religious literacy and critical thinking can prepare students to appreciate pluralism in religious-secular perspectives toward understanding and engagement. For example, acquiring an understanding of Christianity’s historical inputs towards democratic ideals and secular emphasis can prepare youth to appreciate the richness of coexistence and seek balance³⁰.

Advocating for Civic Activism Rooted in Secular and Inclusive Principles

Civic activism is a potent way of thwarting the dangers of the intersection between Christianity and democracy.³¹ To do so, such activism will have to be rooted in secularity and broad-based principles that accommodate society’s plurality of beliefs. Coalitions that bring religious and secular together in a common cause, such as combating poverty and environmental change, are likely to prove that cooperating without undermining church-state separation is possible.

Furthermore, civic engagement also has to be extended toward minority rights as a form of social justice. That is, in advocating for measures that promote equal participation and resources for all citizens regardless of religious background. For example, measures to prevent vote rigging and affordable healthcare can be harnessed

²⁹Smith, D. E. (2015). *India as a secular state*. Princeton University Press.

<https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=8zXWCgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=First,+the+rule+of+state+secularism+has+to+be+reaffirmed,+which+ensures+that+no+religion+dictates+the+political+process&ots=wzp6dULAYk&sig=0PzhGuvO-rk5Am0jf-XhGa8qs-I>

³⁰Wilson, Erin K. *After Secularism: Rethinking Religion in Global Politics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, pp. 162–189.

³¹Judge, M. (2020). Navigating paradox: Towards a conceptual framework for activism at the intersection of religion and sexuality. *HTS Theologies Studies/Theological Studies*, 76(3). <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/hts/article/view/212576>

to unify varied communities around shared objectives, affirming democracy on its foundation as it supports religious plurality.

Finally, civic activism is also supposed to counter religious political exploitation.³² It criticizes political leaders whenever they resort to religious principles to justify discriminatory measures and rally a religious denomination to secure political dividends.³³ By advocating openness and accountability, activists can avert religious exploitation to debase democratic ideals.

CONCLUSIONS

The meeting point between Christianity and democracy, as historically vital as it is, is not a risk that needs to be shunned so that democracy's ideals of openness, secularity, and equality are not eroded. This paper has explored the risks associated with the blending of these two forces, including the influence of religion in legislation, the exclusion of minority communities, the political manipulation of religious rhetoric, and the resulting societal radicalization and division. All these are a reminder that religious faith and democracy must be separated clearly so that all citizens are treated and represented equally.

The central argument of this paper is that while democracy and Christianity have historically had a beneficial reciprocal influence on one another, their interaction in modern societies can lead to the erosion of secular values and the exclusion of non-Christian minorities.³⁴ To counter these risks, a healthy state-religion balance is essential for new principles of fusion, state secularity, and participatory activism. By bringing common values and putting religious and non-religious people in conversation, everyday challenges can be met in a way that does not erode the pluralistic nature of democracy.

In conclusion, democracy's future is in its ability to adapt and remain inclusive in the face of a pluralism of opinion and belief. This means holding on to secularism, safeguarding minority rights, and formulating policies that employ religion as an instrument of discrimination and exclusion. Democratic regimes can, by holding on to these principles, be guaranteed that all their citizens, irrespective of religious and cultural identity, are listened to and regarded. The call to activism is simple: to defend democracy, we must prioritize inclusivity, equality, and the separation of church and state, ensuring that no one is left behind in pursuing a just and fair society.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Audi, Robert. *Democratic Authority and the Separation of Church and State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 45–68.
2. Bitzer, Lloyd F. "Political Rhetoric." In *Landmark Essays on Contemporary Rhetoric*, 1–22. New York: Routledge, 2020. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003059226-1/political-rhetoric-lloyd-bitzer>.
3. Casanova, José. *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp. 215–242.
4. Dueck, A. C. *The Recovery of the Moral Tradition: The New Fusionism in Christian Political Thought*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018, 91–120.
5. Fung, Archon. "Putting the Public Back into Governance: The Challenges of Citizen Participation and Its Future." *Public Administration Review* 75, no. 4 (2015): 513–522. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/puar.12361>.

³²Laborde, Cécile. *Liberalism's Religion*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017, pp. 145–178.

³³Gentile, E. (2020). *Politics as religion*. <https://www.torrossa.com/gs/resourceProxy?an=5575937&publisher=FZO137>

³⁴Roy, O. (2013). *Holy ignorance: When religion and culture part ways*. Oxford University Press, USA. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=yQMqBgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=The+central+argument+of+this+paper+is+that+while+democracy+and+Christianity+have+historically+had+a+beneficial+reciprocal+influence+on+one+another,+their+interaction+in+modern+societies+can+lead+to+the+erosion+of+secular+values+and+the+exclusion+of+non-Christian+minorities&ots=Ac06RVn6Z&sig=zM1aHTKU1Suf6lzdOv8QntYeJ6c>

6. Gentile, Emilio. Politics as Religion. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2020. <https://www.torrossa.com/gs/resourceProxy?an=5575937&publisher=FZO137>.
7. Gorski, Philip S., and Samuel L. Perry. The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022, 33–59.
8. Hajnal, Zoltan, Nazita Lajevardi, and Lindsay Nielson. “Voter Identification Laws and the Suppression of Minority Votes.” The Journal of Politics 79, no. 2 (2017): 363–379. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/688343>.
9. Judge, Melanie. “Navigating Paradox: Towards a Conceptual Framework for Activism at the Intersection of Religion and Sexuality.” HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies 76, no. 3 (2020). <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/hts/article/view/212576>.
10. Kaczor, Christopher. The Ethics of Abortion: Women's Rights, Human Life, and the Question of Justice. New York: Routledge, 2022, 56–83.
11. Ketcham, Ralph. The Idea of Democracy in the Modern Era. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2021. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=YXSrEAAQBAJ>.
12. Kim, S. M., J. B. Banawiratma, and D. Sofjan. “Religious Pluralism Discourse in the Public Sphere of Indonesia: A Critical Application of Communicative Action Theory to Inter-Religious Dialogue.” Religio: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama 10, no. 2 (2020): 158–188. <https://jurnalfuf.uinsa.ac.id/index.php/religio/article/view/1307>.
13. Laborde, Cécile. Liberalism’s Religion. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017, 145–178.
14. Larsson, Tomas. “Monkish Politics in Southeast Asia: Religious Disenfranchisement in Comparative and Theoretical Perspective.” Modern Asian Studies 49, no. 1 (2015): 40–82. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/modern-asian-studies/article/monkish-politics-in-southeast-asia-religious-disenfranchisement-in-comparative-and-theoretical-perspective/AFCDDDEBA3E44FED407432EF7E84BBB62>.
15. Mahmood, Saba. Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2015. <https://www.torrossa.com/gs/resourceProxy?an=5563845&publisher=FZO137>.
16. Maples, Grant W. Student Religious Accommodation Policies and Non-Christian College Student Perceptions of Institutional Support: A Mixed Methods Dissertation. North Carolina State University, 2023. <https://search.proquest.com/openview/763a858b9416df856c0bc01db549db10/1>.
17. Martin, Dale B. Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2021. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=pkEpEAAQBAJ>.
18. McCoy, Jennifer, Tahmina Rahman, and Murat Somer. “Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy: Common Patterns, Dynamics, and Pernicious Consequences for Democratic Politics.” American Behavioral Scientist 62, no. 1 (2018): 16–42. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0002764218759576>.
19. McGrath, Alister E. The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2008. https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=Nxl8V_aAvpAC.
20. Micklethwait, John, and Adrian Wooldridge. God Is Back: How the Global Revival of Faith Is Changing the World. New York: Penguin Press, 2009, 202–231.
21. Mendus, Susan. Politics and Morality. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009, 60–86.
22. Perreau-Saussine, Emile. Catholicism and Democracy: An Essay in the History of Political Thought. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=IsyZEAAQBAJ>.
23. Perry, Samuel L. “Christian Nationalism and Polarization in American Politics.” Sociology of Religion 83, no. 1 (2022): 1–25.
24. Philpott, Daniel. Religious Freedom in Islam: The Fate of a Universal Human Right in the Muslim World Today. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019, 176–199.
25. Robbins, Ira P. “The Obsolescence of Blue Laws in the 21st Century.” Stanford Law & Policy Review 33 (2022): 289. https://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3203&context=facsch_lawrev.
26. Rosenblum, Nancy L. Obligations of Citizenship and Demands of Faith: Religious Accommodation in Pluralist Democracies. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2021. <https://www.torrossa.com/gs/resourceProxy?an=5641941&publisher=FZO137>.

27. Roy, Olivier. *Holy Ignorance: When Religion and Culture Part Ways*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=yQMqBgAAQBAJ>.
28. Skinner, Quentin. *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Vol. 2: The Age of Reformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, 250–277.
29. Smith, Christian. *Disruptive Religion: The Force of Faith in Social Movement Activism*. New York: Routledge, 2014. <https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/books/mono/download?identifierName=doi&identifierValue=10.4324/9781315022147&type=googlepdf>.
30. Smith, Donald E. *India as a Secular State*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=8zXWCgAAQBAJ>.
31. Stepan, Alfred. “Religion, Democracy, and the ‘Twin Tolerations.’” *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 4 (2000): 37–57.
32. Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007, 512–513.
33. Westwood, Sue. “Can Religious Social Workers Practice Affirmatively with LGBTQ+ Clients? Exploring the Impact of Beliefs on Practice.” *British Journal of Social Work* 52, no. 1 (2022): 162–179. <https://academic.oup.com/bjsw/article-abstract/52/1/162/6253507>.
34. Wilson, Erin K. *After Secularism: Rethinking Religion in Global Politics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 162–189.