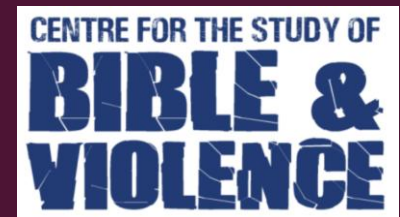

CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM: IDEOLOGY, THEOLOGY, AND PASTORAL RESPONSES

HELEN PAYNTER,
DIRECTOR, CENTRE FOR THE STUDY
OF BIBLE AND VIOLENCE



WHAT ARE WE SEEING?





**“A much more muscular defence of
our Christian heritage.”**



Police investigate far-right 'invasions' of Bradford and Glasgow mosques

Representatives of Britain First hand out leaflets and bibles to Muslim worshippers as part of 'Christian crusade' campaign



Men pray in Glasgow mosque, which was one of two targeted in the city by Britain First representatives. Photograph: Murdo Macleod for the Guardian

“I was preaching the gospel outside the mosque...”

Jayda Fransen (c. 2015)



STATE OF HATE 2024

PESSIMISM, DECLINE AND
THE RISING RADICAL RIGHT

“The Radical Right is blossoming. 2023 is the year it came of age.”

“The Islamic Caliphate of Great Britain”



Defend our land!

We have
been
conquered.

They took over
Hagia Sophia in
1453... Now
they've seized the
UK without firing
a shot.

We need a
new crusade!

Exorcise
the
cathedral!

(April 2024)

JULY 2024:TOMMY ROBINSON RALLY APPEALS FROM THE PLATFORM:



“We are not at war with just the Muslim...

I will fight for this cause and the gospel of Jesus Christ. This nation of ours is under attack... Today when I look out across this square, I don't pray for revival in the land. Because today, on the 27th July, standing in Trafalgar Square, I can see in thousands of faces that revival has already begun.”

Cei Dewar



Pastor Rikki Doolan sings 'Jerusalem'

2024 – 25. NICK TENCONI, UKIP

“Detain and deport all illegal invaders. Detain and deport all Islamists. Detain and deport all who are here to colonise. Detain and deport all those who refuse to assimilate.” (1:17)

Later (5:13), he calculates this at 5 million people.

“The new Right rises. And as God is my witness, we will take our country back. And when we do, it will be for his glory.” (7:00)

Unite the Kingdom Rally, 28 Sept 2024

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OneC4pXEu_w



Video posted by Tenconi on X,
Aug 8 2025

<https://x.com/NickTenconi/status/1953922471633334591>

SEPTEMBER 2025: UNITE THE KINGDOM RALLY APPEALS FROM THE PLATFORM:



Brian Tamaki:

- A “religious war” of “Christianity versus the rest”.
- We need to “clean our countries up” by “getting everything out that does not receive Jesus Christ”.
- “Ban any type of public expression in our Christian nation from other religions. Ban halal. Ban burqas. Ban mosques, temples, shrines. We don’t want those in our countries.”



DECEMBER 2025: “PUT CHRIST BACK INTO CHRISTMAS” RALLY, WHITEHALL



- Carols, prayers, scripture
- Testimonies, gospel calls
- No politics
- Is TR now a Christian believer?

In the crowd:

- Observers
- Christians
- “Patriots”

Demographic:

- Mainly but not exclusively white
- Significant proportion of working class



AUTUMN 2026: DANNY TOMMO AND THE “CHRISTIAN PATRIOTIC ARMY”



- There is no political solution (8:11)
- “This is a Christian country. By the grace of God we will protect her.” (9:39)
- “We are in a state of war.” (17:18)
- Explicitly disavows violence.
- Purpose: to take control; to make our government listen. “If they don’t, God help them.” (20:30)
- “It’s good versus evil. It’s really that simple.” (1:13:04)
- Repeated reference to the men of WWII
- 45,000 men joined within one week.

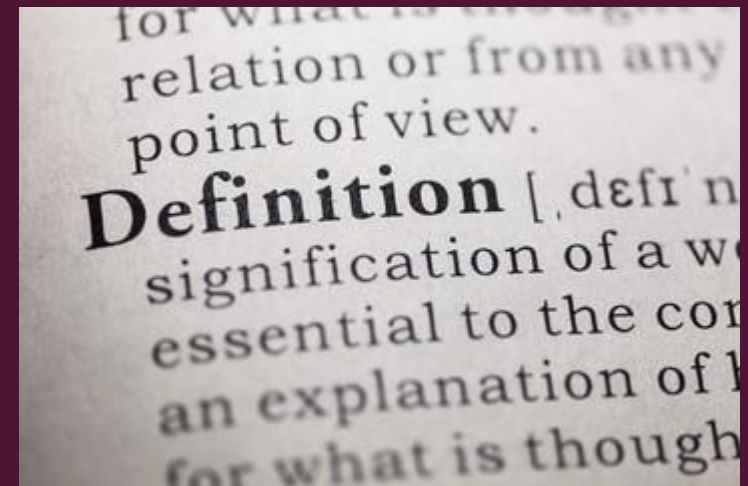


Danny Tommo ✓ @RealDanny
CHRIST IS KING! ✝️ 🗨️ Well done
and maintained complete discipline
understood how important this

They want to use the law on us,
[Show more](#)



SOME DEFINITIONS AND ANALYSIS



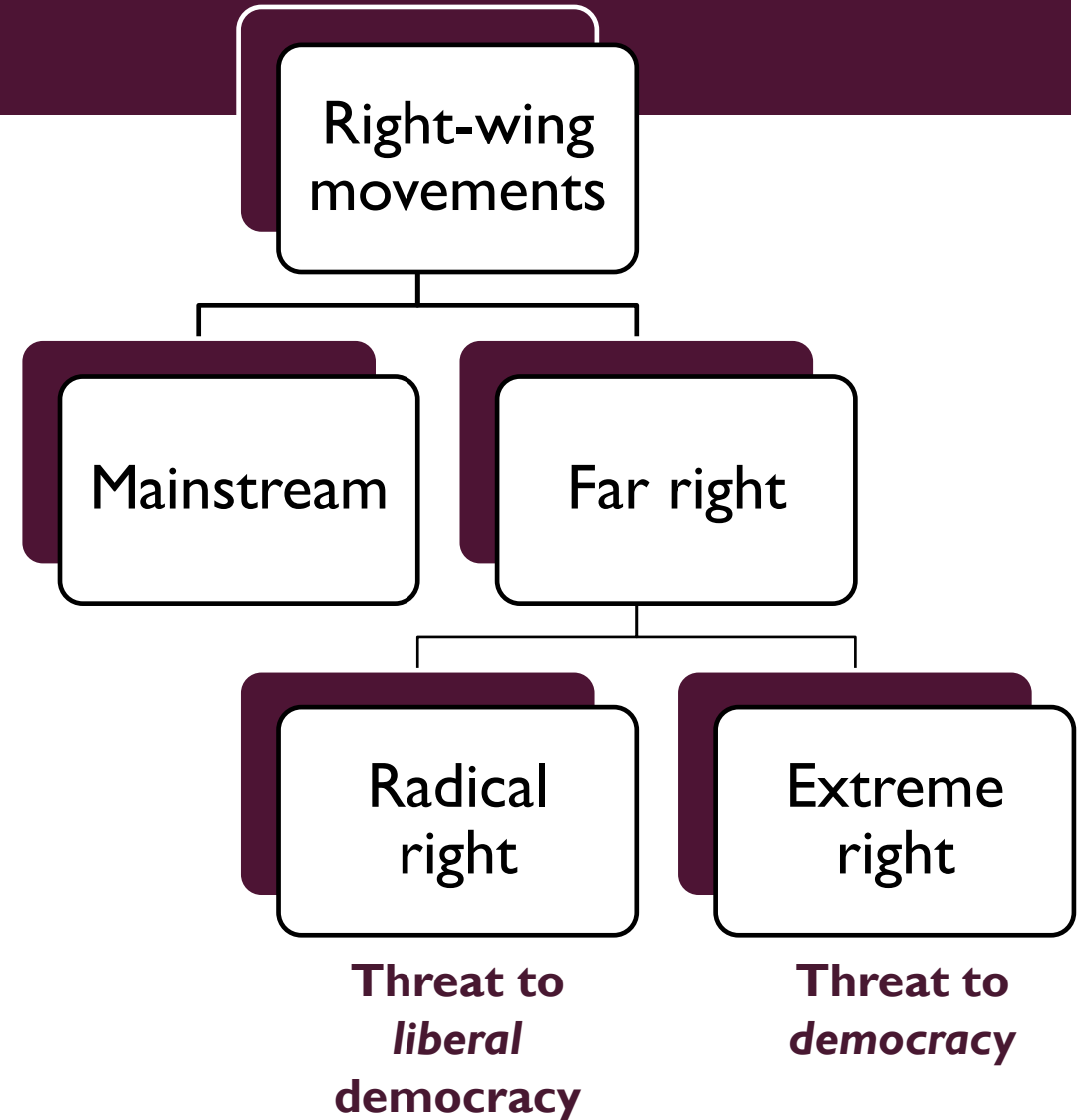
What do we mean by *liberal* democracy?

Free and fair elections
Separation of legislative, judicial
and executive powers
Independence of the press
Protection of minorities
Freedom of speech



Definition: 'Far Right'.

This framework by
Cas Mudde (*The Far
Right Today*, pp.7-8)

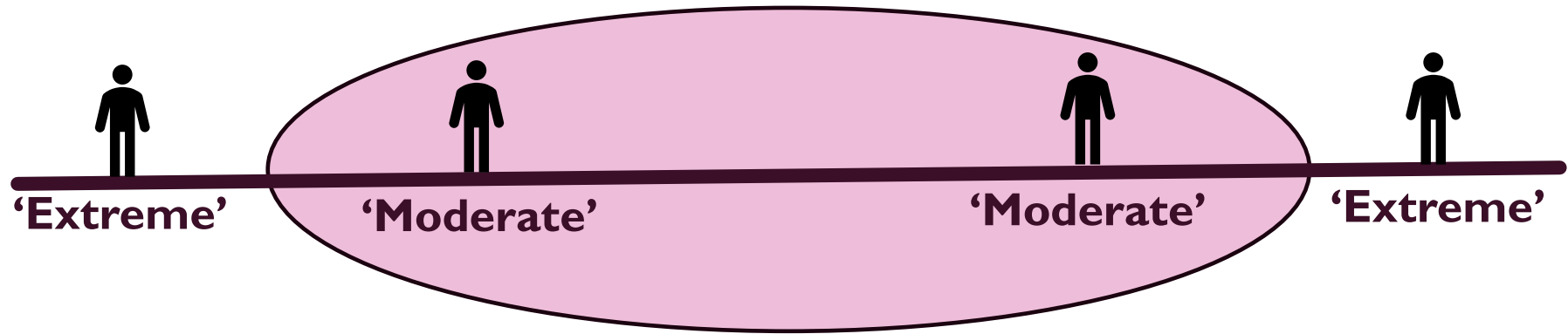


Definitions: 'Christian Nationalism'.

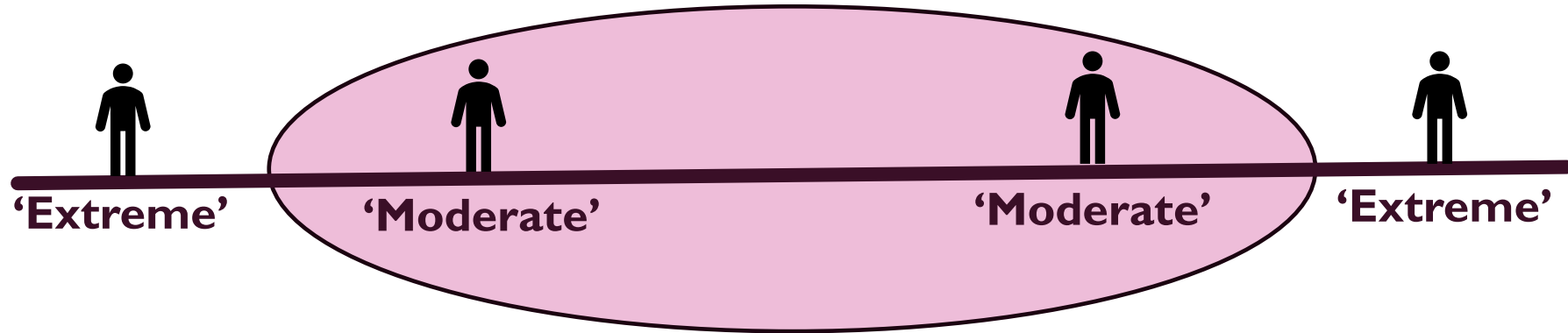
Andrew Whitehead and
Samuel Perry (*Taking
America back for God*, p.10)

“Christian Nationalism is a cultural framework—a collection of myths, traditions, symbols, narratives, and value systems—that idealises and advocates a fusion of Christianity with [national] civic life.

The ‘Christianity’ of Christian nationalism represents something more than religion... It is as ethnic and political as it is religious.”



Boundaries of liberal democracy



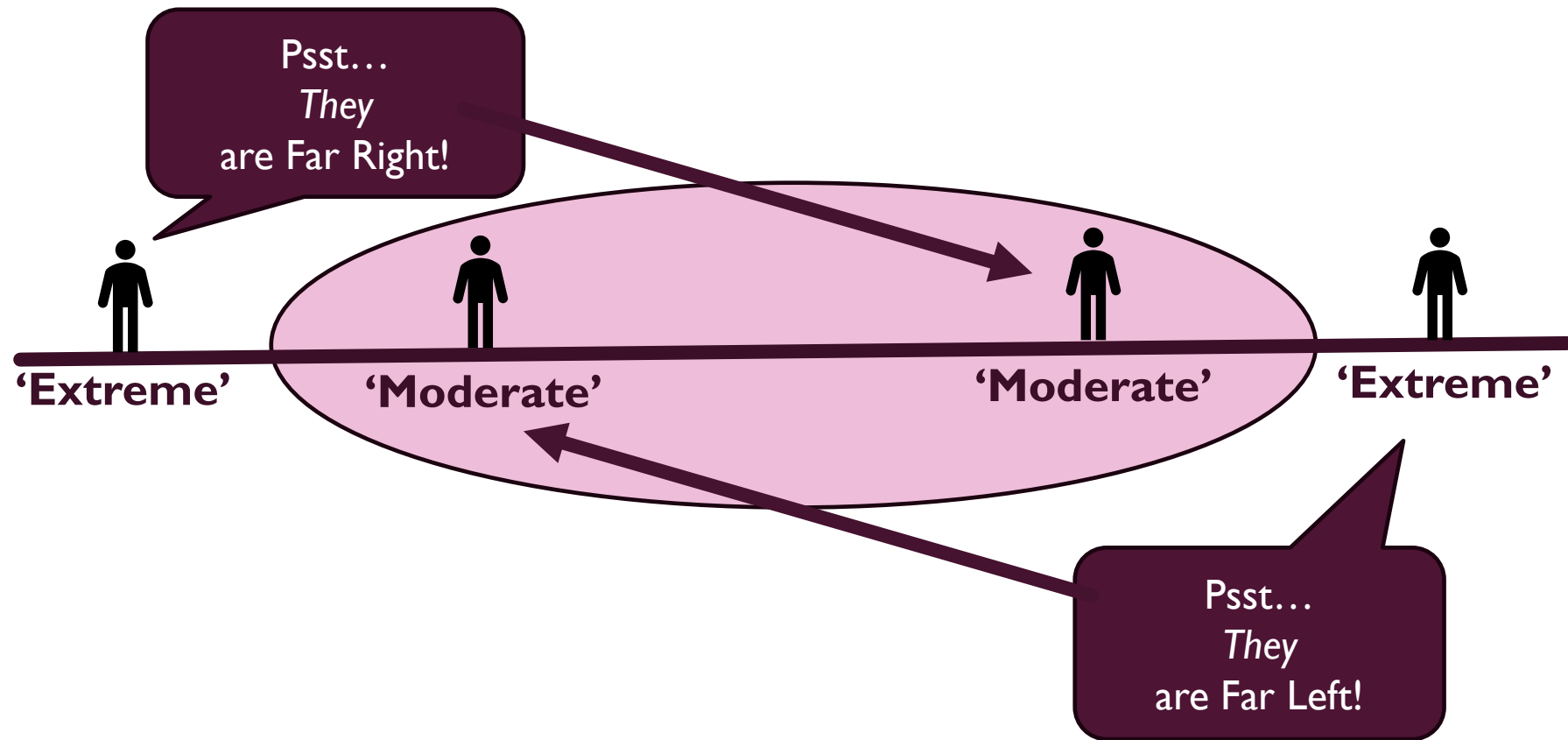
**Imprisonment
without trial
for 'cream-
firsters'**

Jam first

Cream first

**Imprisonment
without trial
for 'jam-
firsters'**





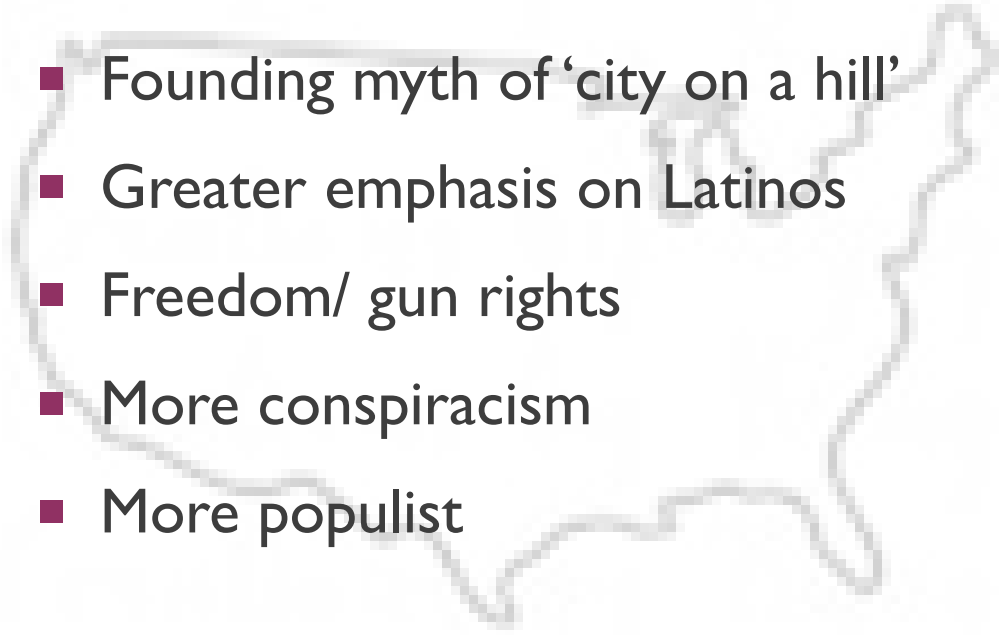
AN IMPRECISE SUMMARY OF RIGHT-LEANING IDEOLOGIES AND THEIR MORE PROBLEMATIC EXTREMES

- Concern around immigration and desire for tighter border control
- Concern around the growth of or influence of Islam
- Sense of Christian marginalisation or persecution
- Patriotism; concern about loss of English/British identity
- Concern for our armed forces and veterans
- Conservative stance on issues of human sexuality and gender identity
- Preference of 'individual freedom' over 'group'
- Desire to recover a 'Christian nation'
- Conspiracisms (note, these are not confined to the 'right')



- Punitive and hostile attitudes to immigrants of any cause
- Hate speech or violence towards people who aren't straight and cis
- Covert or overt racism
- Attempt to suppress freedom of speech (not limited to the 'right')
- Conflation of 'Christian' with 'English/British' with 'White'
- Suppression of freedom of religion and anti-Muslim rhetoric
- Promotion of false claims (not limited to those on the 'right')
- Antisemitic speech or action

USA AND UK COMPARED

- 
- Founding myth of 'city on a hill'
 - Greater emphasis on Latinos
 - Freedom/ gun rights
 - More conspiracism
 - More populist

- 
- Founding myth of King Alfred
 - Greater emphasis on Islam (with attendant theological rationale)
 - Four-nation nationalisms

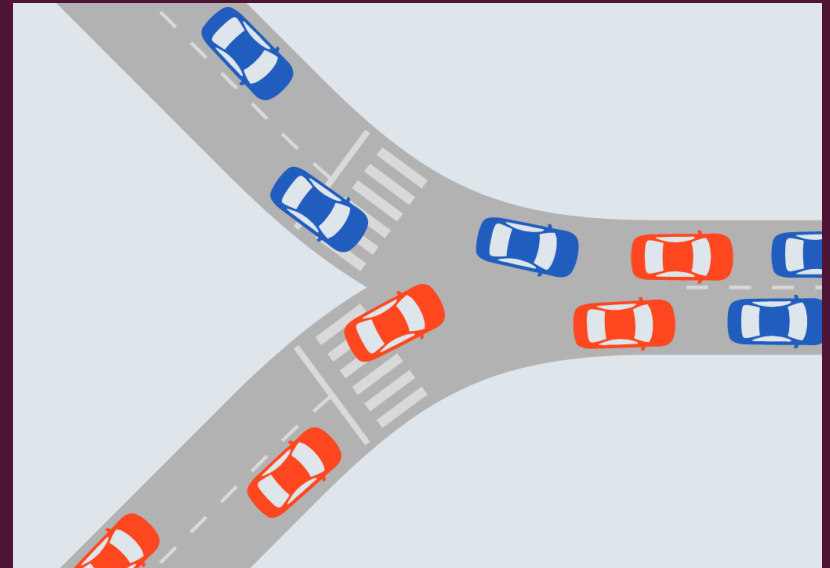
Christian evangelical movements

New Apostolic Reformation

Bethel

Hillsong (Aus)

WHERE POLITICAL IDEOLOGY MEETS THEOLOGY



WHAT IS THE APPEAL TO CHRISTIANS?

- Loss of Christian 'visibility' in society (perceived persecution)

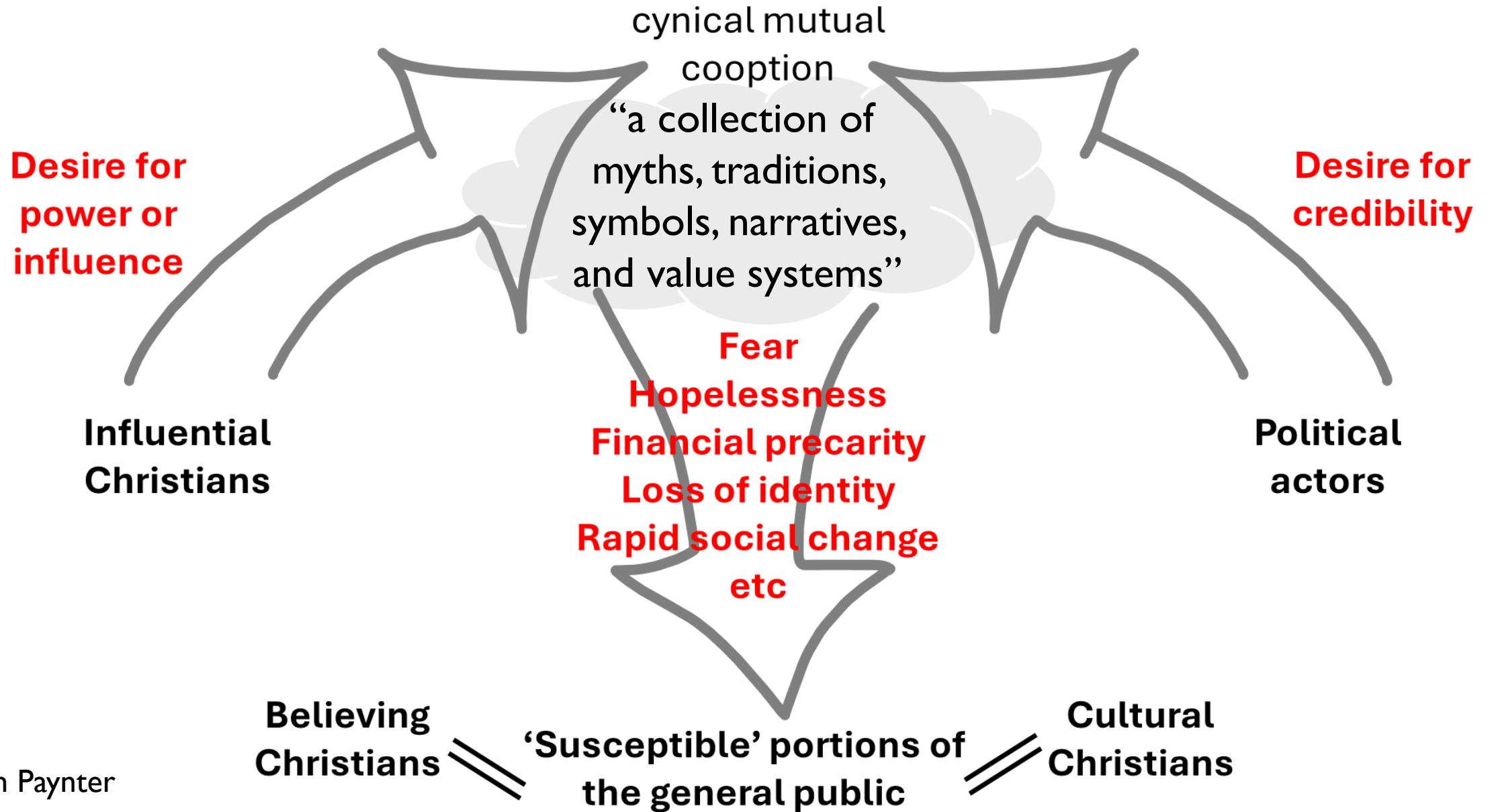
- Growth in Islam

- Beginning- and end-of-life trends

- Law changes around same-sex marriage and Trans rights

	2001	2011	2021
Islam	1.6m	2.7m	3.9m
Christianity	71.7m	33.2m	27.5m

- Note that the factors making these movements appealing to many Christians are not identical to the factors making these movements appealing to many in wider society, especially those from impoverished backgrounds.



A Faustian pact?

“The Alt-Right shouldn’t get hung up on being anti-Christian, because Christianity is infinitely malleable. After we seize power and get on television... the Alt-Right will be celebrated as Christian.”

*Hunter Wallace,
Executive Director, Occidental
Dissent*

CONSIDERING OUR RESPONSE



WE NEED TO THINK THEOLOGICALLY ABOUT...

- The ideologies themselves
- The polarisation of society
- The extent and nature of the Church's involvement in politics
- The missional implications: threat or opportunity?
- The pastoral implications (the Church as pastor to the culture?)
- The character (soul?) of the Church in this moment

A THIN THEOLOGY



THE TASK: EQUIP PEOPLE IN OUR CHURCHES TO SMELL A RAT

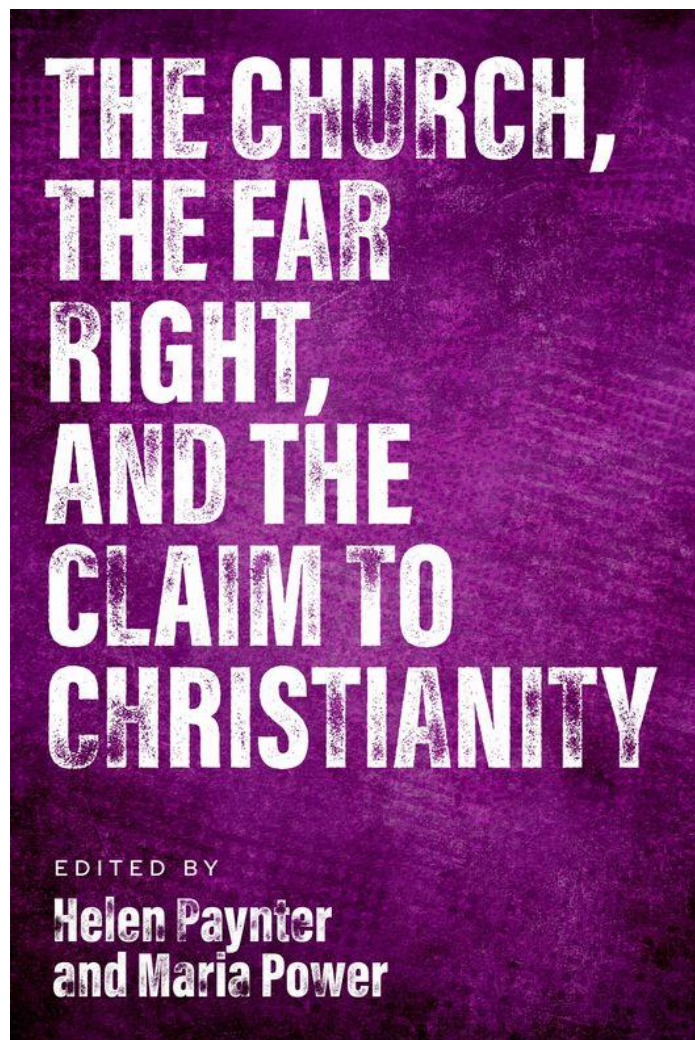


SOME THICKER THEOLOGICAL THEMES WITHIN STRAINS OF CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

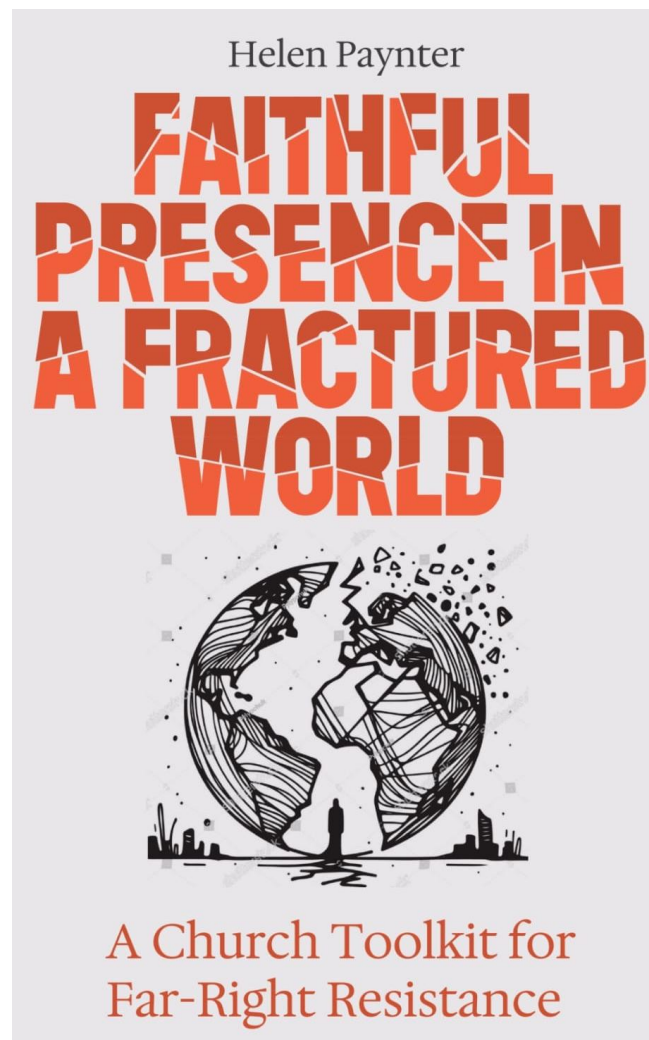
- Dominionism
- Restoring a Christian Britain
- The Church's historic role in establishing Britain's culture of tolerance, and what that should mean for the established church
- Old Testament Israel as a model for modern nation-states

THE TASK: RESPOND TO CAREFUL ARGUMENT WITH CAREFUL THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT





Funded by  The British Academy



Available at the
information stand

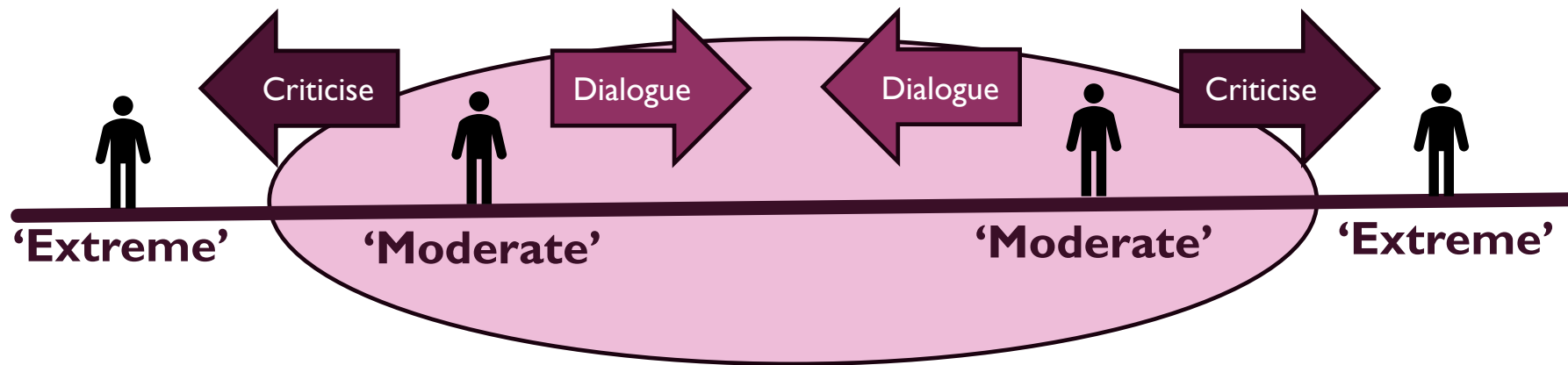
Forthcoming:

Faithful disciples, faithful citizens

Six weeks of Bible readings
with accompanying
group study material
(SPCK, 2027)

***Christ and Country:
Theological Reflections on
Christian Nationalism in the
United Kingdom***
(IVP, 2027)

ATTEND TO THE PLANK IN OUR OWN EYE



RESIST THE OFFER OF POWER

Temptation of Jesus

Jesus' resistance to the Zealots' offer



RESIST THE ATTRACTION OF THE CHARISMATIC LEADER

Daniel 7: All human powers are ultimately bestial

Psalms 146:3 “Do not put your trust in princes”



BE PROPHETIC



A false dichotomy:

The state must be run by the Church, or else faith will become wholly privatised

A third way:

Understand the nature of the Church's prophetic role

**TRUTH
TO
POWER**

NOTICE HOW THE KINGDOM DOES (AND DOESN'T) GROW

Parable of the mustard seed

Parable of the yeast

Parable of the seed in the field



RESIST THE INSTINCT TO ENTHRONE CHRIST

Christ is on the throne, and doesn't require a helping shove from us to enthrone him. Our responsibility is to live as though we believe it.

Christ is on the throne, and so we don't need to make dodgy deals to put him there. Our responsibility is to behave like his Son.

Christ is on the throne, and so we can trust that he will grow his kingdom.



GRACE AND TRUTH

Job's friends

Avoid digging ditches of our own



FRUIT AS AN EVALUATIVE PRINCIPLE

Know them by their fruit

Test the spirits

‘Not everyone who says to me
“Lord, Lord” will enter the
kingdom of heaven



AVOID OVER-REACTING



- Don't fall into the polarisation trap.
- Practice good listening.
- Not everything we don't like is persecution.
- Don't deny what is evidently true.
- Practice theological triage
- Don't make up a new story, tell our old old better story