

THE NATURE AND HISTORY OF AMERICAN CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

Introduction

Definition of terms (See Brauch quotes on first five lines on reverse side.)

Common features of Puritan “Christian nationalism” in New England

Doctrine of Exceptionalism - John Winthrop “City set on a hill,” “New Zion in the Wilderness”
Special Mission assumption of moral superiority paternalism
Social stratification
Natives were “primitive savages” limited number of Puritan inhabitants had civil rights

Doctrine of Discovery
Papal decrees 1493 post-Columbus application to the “new world.”
Native American – European Colonists’ conflicting views of land ownership

Religion
Union of political and religious realms Concept of the state church
Strict standard of practice and morality governed by local magistrates

Intolerance of persons with dissenting views on politics and religion
Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson,
Persecution and execution of Quakers the Salem Witch Hunt

Continuing examples of American Christian nationalism

The Doctrine of Manifest Destiny
Anti-Catholic and Nativist movements
The Jim Crow Policy and continuing white supremacy assertion
The McKinley Philippines dilemma

American Civil Religion

David Barton “America’s Godly Heritage” Christian founding fathers conservative Christian values should dominate
The Mason Weems Washington accounts the *Apotheosis of Washington*
Rick Green and the Patriot Academy
Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority
Carl McIntire and the local connection and incidents at Blooming Glen and Plains Mennonite churches

Christian imagery and rhetoric at the January 6, 2021 Capitol Riot

Christian nationalism is dangerous for American democracy and for the Christian Church (See lines six through ten on reverse side.)

It seems there is a wide range of understanding of the definition and application of the word “Christian.” At times it actually seems like a disguise for much that runs counter to what Jesus taught and exemplified.

Christian Nationalism	Jesus Model
Authoritarian assertion of power to control and dominate	Leadership through servanthood and invitation
Revenge and personal vendettas	Forgiveness and reconciliation
Racial, social, and gender hierarchies	“In Jesus Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female; We are all one in Christ Jesus.” Gal. 3:28
Motivated by competition and “rugged individualism”	Motivated by a sense of community and the general welfare
National priorities dominant	Strong global perspective

Christian Nationalism Quotes

Professor Manfred Brauch, (Living Branches *Living U*, April 2024), “Christian nationalism is the belief that we are a nation defined by Christianity and our national and state laws should privilege this heritage by taking active steps to keep it this way.”

“Christian nationalism is a cultural framework idealizing and promoting a fusion of a particular expression of Christianity with American civil life.”

“Christian nationalism is a political/religious cultural identity, fueled by fear, that sees peoples of other religions and cultural identities as a threat to its identity and culture, if we do not preserve our cultural/religious heritage.”

“Christian nationalism is dangerous for America because it tends to treat other Americans as second-class citizens, fails to respect the full religious liberty of all Americans, promotes ‘morals legislation’ to regulate conduct that would tend our nation toward a ‘morality police state,’ fosters an ideology held overwhelmingly by white Christian Americans, and creates fear and the belief that Christians are victims of persecution.”

“Christian nationalism is dangerous for the Church because the real mission of the Church is to speak the truth acting in love, promoting justice, welcoming the stranger, caring about/for the lost, the least, the less.”

“When the state favors Christianity, those holding a different faith (or no faith) are marginalized and resent both Christians and their God.” “When the Church embraces Christian nationalism, it produces ‘America-first’ Christians, rather than ‘Jesus-first’ Christians.”

“In the life and teachings of Jesus, human understandings and uses of power to control, oppress, coerce, demean, manipulate, and exclude are decidedly rejected as contrary to the divine purposes for human life and life-in-community.”

“In the New Testament understanding of the ‘Lordship of Jesus’, authentic power is the power of God’s Spirit, a gift to the Christian community, which is not used to control and dominate, but to serve.”

Anabaptist World, May 2024, “Christian America debate spreads,” Bob Smietana, Religious News Services, pp. 54-55

“Jim Wallis and Donald Trump believe in their own ways that the Bible can save America. Trump characterized Christian scripture as both a symbol of power and a sign to his followers that their way of life is under threat.” For Wallis the Bible’s substance, not its symbolism, holds the power to address America’s ills and save democracy. American democracy is in crisis and needs to be saved, but won’t be accomplished by Americans giving in to their ‘worst demons’ and tearing each other apart.”

“Trump’s Christian America is an idea turned into a weapon with his Christian followers portrayed as the real Americans pitted against not only non-Christians, but Christians who don’t share their political views.”

“Trump’s Bible and ours,” Jonny Rashid, pastor of West Philadelphia Mennonite Fellowship and author of *Jesus Takes a Side*, p 48

“American civil religion, with its hymns, founding patriarchs, and sacred documents, has always tried to mimic what authentic faith offers. Trump’s Bible is a cynical way to garner support from his most trustworthy bloc, white evangelical Christians.”

“As a Christian, I do not think any nation is more worthy than another.” “Nationalism of any sort is an affront to the teachings of Jesus and the Bible to welcome strangers and love our neighbors and enemies.” “Anabaptists have resisted nationalistic faith from our beginnings. Our spiritual ancestors refused to participate in the state church and its sacraments. Some paid with their lives for their beliefs.”

Anabaptist World, Aug. 25, 2023, “I was a Christian Nationalist,” David C. Cramer pp. 8-10

“Quoting Andrew Whitehead – “Christian nationalism is a cultural framework asserting that all civic life in the United States should be organized according to a particular form of conservative Christianity. It brings with it a host of cultural assumptions, particularly a moral traditionalism predicated on maintaining social hierarchies, a comfort with the right kind of authoritarian social control that includes the threat and use of violence and a desire for strict ethno-racial boundaries designating who can fully participate in American civic life. In short, Christian nationalism is wholly obsessed with power intimately intertwined with fear and completely comfortable with, and at times demand, the use of violence.”

“Hazy history,” Harrison Wiebe, p. 11

“The reason today’s Anabaptists accept Christian nationalism is because of their historical and theological ignorance. A significant percentage of those in the pews each Sunday are unaware of what it means to be Anabaptist.” “Separation from the world was a core tenet of Anabaptist thought. To be involved with the world, such as civil government, entailed moral and ethical compromise.” “A responsible civil citizen would fail to live up to the rigorous code of ethics Jesus called for in the Sermon on the Mount.”

“It’s a Myth,” Steve Griffin, p. 16

“Christian nationalism is loyalty to a narrative, not a nation. It is devotion to a heroic narrative of one’s country and its role in the world. Patriotism is love and pride for one’s country, warts and all. Nationalism is allegiance to an unblemished narrative about one’s country, no warts at all.”

“Unholy alliance,” Editorial, Paul Schrag, p. 7

“Christian nationalism seeks power and privilege for followers of one faith.” “American Christians forfeit the soul of their own faith when they try to link it with secular power.” “Christianity becomes unrecognizable as the way of Jesus when it gives cover to white supremacy and acts of violence.” “The gospel of MAGA Jesus includes personal salvation, but excludes salvation through Jesus’ whole life.” “Preaching and teaching his entire life- the gospel of peace, inclusion, and love of neighbor is our most effective counter to the Christian nationalist narrative of resentment and fear. We need to recognize the idolaters of power are objects of God’s love too.”

Menno Simons (Condensed from larger statement) “True evangelical faith cannot lie dormant. It clothes the naked, feeds the hungry, comforts the sorrowful, and shelters the destitute. It serves those that harm and binds up that which is wounded. It has become all things to all people.”

Matthew 25:35-40 “I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and in prison and you came to visit me... Then the righteous will answer him. ‘Lord when did we see you (in need of these things)?’ “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Green – “We need to be the party of Christian Nationalism and I’m a Christian and I say it proudly that we should be Christian Nationalists”

Rep. Lauren Boebert – “The Church is supposed to direct the government and the government is not supposed to direct the Church. That is not how our founding fathers intended it.” “I’m tired of this Church and state junk!”

Michael Flynn -- “American exceptionalism is for real and I am damn proud to stand for Old Glory. We must be one nation under God and one religion under God.”

Mike Hucklebe -- “To deny American exceptionalism is to deny the heart and soul of this nation.”