

Christian Nationalism

Question: How do we effectively preach the gospel knowing that it's been convoluted with white nationalism not just now but throughout history?

January 6th rioters supporting President Trump's attempt to overturn the election stormed into the US Capitol. Video shows rioters vandalizing, ransacking and occupying the offices of lawmakers for several hours. But what was most disturbing to me was to see that one of the first rioters to enter into the Senate Chamber was carrying a Christian flag. As you viewed the footage you could see people waving banners that read "Jesus Saves," "Jesus is my Savior/Trump is my president." A flag that read "Proud American Christian". A hat that read "God, Guns and Trump".

An article in the Baptist Standard this week identified these signs as belonging to the false ideology of Christian nationalism. Christian nationalism is a concept that idealizes and advocates a merging of the Christian faith with American civic life. Christian nationalism contends that America is a Christian nation and that the aim of politics in America is to maintain this Christian identity by instituting Christian values in society and in public policies. This is why we saw this past year a number of evangelical leaders stating that a true Christian will vote Republican. Jack Goodyear, dean of the Gary Cook School of Leadership at Dallas Baptist University, wrote, "Politics and religion have increasingly aligned for Christians in America, leading to the belief that to be a good Christian one must vote for a certain party. Or that certain politicians are God's chosen instruments. However, this conflating of religion and politics comes with a heavy price."

[Christianity Today – Let's Talk About Christian Nationalism] Andrew Whitehead and Samuel Perry – "Taking America Back for God" – this book profiles Christian Nationalism. Whitehead and Perry define Christian Nationalism as: a cultural framework – a collection of myths, traditions, symbols, narratives and value systems – that idealizes and advocates a fusion of Christianity with American civic life...the 'Christianity' of Christian nationalism represents something more than religion... it includes assumptions of nativism, white supremacy, patriarchy, heteronormativity, along with divine sanction for authoritarian control and militarism. It is as ethnic and political as it is religious. [p. 10]

The book fleshes out four orientations to Christian nationalism. Rejecters, Resisters, Accommodators and Ambassadors. The Rejecters [21.5 percent of Americans] are resistant to implementing Christian values in American public life. Resisters [26.6 percent of Americans] are suspicious of the declaration that America is a Christian nation, they might be comfortable with the presence of religious symbols in public places. Accommodators [32.1 percent of Americans] lean toward Christian nationalism while holding some ambivalence toward it. Ambassadors [19.8 of Americans] believe that the founding fathers were Christians and America's prosperity hinges on obedience to God's law in the Bible [but with strong preference for OT texts.

In chapter 2 of the book the author address the relationship between Christian nationalism and political power. Whitehead and Perry argue that Christian nationalism has little to do with personal religiosity and everything to do with acquiring and leveraging political power around key issues like Islam, immigration, abortion/patriarchy, militarism, gun control and sacrificial

allegiance to the flag. Obsession with power explains why Ambassadors and Accommodators overwhelmingly voted for Donald Trump in 2016 election while overlooking the many ways that Trump's personal life is at odds with Christian ethics. Again, Trump's personal piety is of little significance – what matters is that he pulls the right ideological levers to shape America into the image of Christian nationalism, to reclaim a mythical past. Herein lies the most provocative idea in the book: one does not have to go to church or hold to orthodox Christian beliefs to be a Christian nationalist.

Chapter 3 explores how Christian nationalism embraces and constructs boundaries to exclude the ethno-religious other [Muslims & Mexicans]. The chapter opens with jarring quotes from interviews with Ambassadors, who appeal to Jerusalem's walls, the Pope's walls and the New Jerusalem's wall in the Book of Revelation to divinely legitimate fortified borders. Christian nationalists, then, appeal, to biblical justification to construct an "us" [i.e. "white" Christians] versus "them" [heathen] caste system, wherein immigrants, BIPOC [Black Indigenous, People of Color] LGBTQ persons and women are subordinate. This segregated worldview attempts to monopolize power among white, native-born Protestants to control social and political institutions.

One person summarized the beliefs of Christian Nationalism as: Trump is a Christ-like figure; The US is as important as Heaven; The US flag is a symbol of Christianity, The Republican Party is as important as the Church.

Quote: Mike Lindell [My Pillow CEO] stated that, "Trump was 'chosen by God' to run for president."

Quote: Franklin Graham, Billy Graham's son, posted on Facebook after the House impeachment vote last week, compared the Republicans who voted in favor of President Trump's second impeachment to Judas – "these ten, from his own party, joined in the feeding frenzy. It makes you wonder what the thirty pieces of silver were that Speaker Pelosi promised for this betrayal."

Dominion Theology/Christian Reconstructionism:

Advocates support the imposing of OT law upon American society [theonomy – theos – God; nomos – law], believing that by doing so they can make America a Christian nation. This theology is the basis of the Christian Right or religious right, who strongly support socially conservative policies. In fact, some of the conservative positions you would hear them speak out on are school prayer, intelligent design, Christian nationalism, sex education, abortion and pornography.

Dominion Theology means exactly that, exercising dominion over American politics and society by means of OT Law. John Piper stated, "The closer we get to Dominion Theology the closer we get to living by the sword. Thus, you hear advocates voicing their 2nd Amendment rights [God, Guns and Trump]."

The Christian Right:

In 1863, representatives from eleven Christian denominations in the United States organized the National Reform Association with the goal of adding a Christian amendment to the U.S. Constitution, in order to establish the country as a Christian state. The National Reform Association is seen as one of the first organizations of the Christian right, through which adherents from several Christian denominations worked together to try to enshrine Christianity in American politics.

Since the late 1970s, the Christian right has been a notable force in both the Republican Party and American politics when Baptist pastor Jerry Falwell and other Christian leaders began to urge conservative Christians to involve themselves in the political process.

Since about 1980, the Christian right has been associated with several institutions including the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition, Focus on the Family, and the Family Research Council.

The main universities associated with the Christian Right in the United States are: Bob Jones University, Christendom College, Liberty University and Regent University.

What's the goal of the Christian Right? To defend the country against the growth of liberal secularism. How do you defend the country? By electing conservative leaders into office who will enforce through legislation and Supreme Court decisions a Christian morality upon society.

On September 29th, 2016, Donald Trump, who was then running on Republican ticket as President of the United States meet with Robert Jeffress, pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, a contributor to Fox News, Wayne Grudem, well-known theologian and co-founder of the Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood; Eric Metaxas, bestselling Christian author and radio host; Ryan Anderson, a senior fellow at the Heritage Foundation; and Jay Richards, a philosopher and senior fellow at the Discovery Institute, a conservative think tank that campaigns against teaching evolution in school. The purpose of this meeting was for Trump to convince the religious right that he shared their vision for America.

The Errors of Christian Nationalism:

1. **America has never been a Christian Nation** – To be a Christian Nation, every citizen must be born again. This has never been the case. This nation may have been built on Christian principles [Judeo-Christian principles] but that doesn't make it a Christian nation, it makes it a false Christian nation. This is seen by how they mishandle the Scripture by applying texts to America that clearly refer to Israel alone: **Example:** 2 Chronicles 7:14 – and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

But the Scriptures declare that Israel alone was exclusively a theocrat nation: **Scrip. Ref:** Psalm 147:19 – He declares His words to Jacob, His statutes and His ordinances to Israel. [20] He has not dealt thus with any nation; And as for His ordinances, they have not known them. Praise the Lord!

2. Christian Nationalism is an Antichrist ideology – it replaces faith alone in Christ alone with the idol of American patriotism. Its main focus is imposing Christian ideals upon American society than proclaiming the gospel. Anyone who teaches that this nation would be better by apply OT Law instead of the gospel is an antichrist. Law only condemns, but only the gospel can save.

3. Christian Nationalism Seeks to Moralize American by OT Law – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in his message “The Other America” said, “Morality cannot be legislated, behavior can be regulated. Law can restrain. Law can’t change the hearts of man but it can change the habits of man.” The error of this attempt by the Christian Right is that it neglects what Jesus Himself said is the greatest commandment in the Law – “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depends the whole Law and Prophets. [Matt. 22:37-40]

If America would have sought to apply the greatest of the OT Law it would have never mistreated Native Americans, enslaved Africans nor put undocumented immigrants in cages.

4. Christian Nationalism is an Unequally Yoked Enterprise – When the Christian Right united with the Republican Party under the guise of a spiritual enterprise – applying Christian values to American civic life. It became unequally yoked: **Scrip. Ref:** 2 Cor. 6:14 – Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? [15] Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

This is why the word “evangelical” is defined more politically than biblically in our society.

Def: Syncretism – means to combine or unite two mutually exclusive belief systems into one. Thus forming a completely different belief system from the two put together.

In other words, when you put Christian together with Nationalism, it ceases to be Christian. The Republican Party is not a Christian Party, it is a secular party that touts morality.

5. Christian Nationalism Seeks to Fight a Spiritual Battle with Carnal Weapons – The Bible does not advocate for Christians to transform the culture. The fallacy of the Christian Right is the belief that it must get society Christianize in order for Christ to return and set up His kingdom [post-millennialism]. But the Bible says: 2 Cor. 10:3-5 – For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, [4] for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. [5] We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

6. Christian Nationalism is Another Name for White Supremacy – **Scrip. Ref:** Rom. 2:11 – For there is no partiality with God.

The God of Christian Nationalism is not the God of the Bible. The Jesus of Christian Nationalism is not the Jesus of the Bible. The followers of Christian Nationalism are not

followers of Jesus Christ. For true followers of Jesus Christ look to the Scriptures as their authority not the Constitution.

During the Capitol siege the QAnon Shaman and other Christian terrorist prayed inside the House Chambers, “Jesus Christ, we invoke your name.”

Quote: Shai Linne – The worst form of idolatry is idol worship in Jesus’ name.

Quote: “Sadly, there are Christians more committed to the second amendment than they are to the second commandment.”

So how do we effectively preach the gospel knowing that it’s been convoluted with white nationalism? 1] We must define our terms – what do we mean by the gospel? By evangelical? 2] What must define our role in society – we are called not to love this world system [1 John 2:15], we are called to live as aliens and strangers [1 Pet. 2:11], we are called to pray for governing authorities [1 Tim. 2:1-3], we are called to submit to governing authorities [1 Pet. 2:13-15] we are called to love our neighbors [1 Pet. 3:17], we are called to live holy lives in light of eternity [1 John 3:1-3]