

Christian Nationalism: 4 Biblical and Unbiblical Forms

The term “Christian nationalism” refers to a belief that a particular nation’s values, culture and laws should respect or reflect biblical ethics and morality. The following are four popular historical views that I have observed related to this subject.

Religious Nationalism

The first view is when church and state are completely integrated so that the opinions and identity of a church will coincide with the values and identity of a particular nation and culture. A prime example of this is the Eastern Orthodox Church. Their churches are so intertwined with the culture and nation that they are named after their country (Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Ukrainian Orthodox, Polish Orthodox).

If there is a civil war or a segment of a nation experiences a geo/political split, the Orthodox Church within that nation will also experience an ecclesial split based on its political alliances. Currently, we are witnessing ecclesial division between the Ukrainian and Russian Orthodox leadership. They are each blessing the respective armies of their nation during the present Russian invasion of Ukraine. This is a very unbiblical form of Christian nationalism since the gospel should never be subservient to the dictates and politics of any nation.

Cultural Christian Nationalism

Since the early centuries of Christianity, church and state have been mingled in certain periods. During the Protestant Reformation, a person was considered either a Roman Catholic or a Protestant based on which nation they were born. (for

example, the Peace of Westphalia in the 17th century ended the 30 Years' War by allowing certain lands to be designated as either Roman Catholic or Protestant.)

Even today, we have people born in Germany or Norway who consider themselves Lutheran, or if they were born in England, they tend to identify as Anglican. This is unbiblical since God has no grandchildren; every person has to be born from above, not of flesh and blood or through the will of men (John 1:12-13). Almost 80 years ago, the world witnessed a horrific example of Christian cultural nationalism when Hitler equated an Arian German with being a historic Lutheran Christian. He even used some of the later quotes of Martin Luther to rile up sentiment against Jewish people and support his notion of the so-called Reich Church. But being born in a certain nation does not grant you citizenship in heaven. The gospel of the kingdom transcends all geo/political identities because, as King of kings, Jesus claims all nations for Himself (Ps. 2).

Political/Christian Nationalism

Since the American Revolution, we have seen some Christians connect the kingdom of God with the United States. Based on their interpretation of Manifest Destiny, some have even called America the "New Israel" because they claim this nation was the only other nation besides Israel that was founded upon a covenant with God (They see this as occurring when men signed the Mayflower Compact and initiated a covenant with God). However, Abraham, the father of Israel, never initiated a covenant with God. God initiated it with Abraham and the nation of Israel (-20, Heb. 6:13-19). In recent days, some of the so-called prophets and their followers seemed to connect the kingdom of God with the political destiny of America, with some even saying that Donald Trump has been crowned as the only recognized U.S. president in heaven. Connecting any political party, person, or secular movement with the kingdom is unbiblical. The kingdom transcends all nations and systems and never depends upon a top-down political control to

prosecute the will of God.

Salt and Light Nationalism

This form of Christian nationalism comes about through gospel permeation, not top-down political coercion. True gospel permeation in society eventually influences a nation with Judeo-Christian principles. After all, Jesus called His followers “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world,” (Matt. 5:13a, 14a), not the salt of the church and the light of the pew. This is an express declaration by Jesus that He expects believers to be prophets to the world. The Lord’s prayer takes it further as it involves praying for God’s kingdom and will to be done on earth (not just in church buildings for two hours on a Sunday morning) as it is in heaven (Luke 11:2-4). Thus, since God claims the earth for Himself, there is no such thing as neutrality in this world. A nation bases its laws and policies upon biblical ethos or autonomous humanism.

Consequently, all Christ-followers should work for biblical righteousness in their civic government and model the values of the kingdom in their particular sphere of influence. If every church were making disciples and releasing them to serve in the workplace, their nation would see transformation from the bottom up through changed hearts and minds.

As far as “salt and light” Christian nationalism, we are responsible as individual believers for loving our neighbor as we love ourselves. We cannot care for others if we do not take care of ourselves. The apostle Paul also commands Christians to manage their household and care for their family members (1 Tim. 3:5, 5:8). The command to take care of one’s own family first can be logically expanded to include providing first for your nation since a nation sustains the ecosystem needed for healthy biological families. Responsible Christians should thus prioritize reaching their nation and support policies that advance the quality of life of their own country if they

truly love their immediate family and community. (If you're a believer living in the USA, a case can be made for an "America first" mindset as long as it doesn't involve the abuse of other nations.)

Christian nationalism is biblical if it is based upon influencing one's nation through bottom-up community service, advanced problem solving and gospel permeation, which then results in the exaltation of Christ in every sphere of society. {eoa}

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