

More Than 500 Evangelicals, Other Faith Leaders Condemn Religion at Insurrection as 'Heretical'

More than 500 evangelical pastors and other faith leaders have signed an open letter decrying "radicalized Christian nationalism," arguing that the religious expressions by insurrectionists during the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol are "heretical" and a "perversion of the Christian faith."

The letter, which was organized by several Christian groups, including the liberal-leaning evangelical group Vote Common Good, decries those who invoked their religious beliefs—especially Christian iterations that skewed toward evangelicalism—while attacking the U.S. Capitol.

"We know from experts on radicalization that one of the key elements is a belief that your actions are 'blessed by God' and ordained by your faith. This is what allows so many people who hold to a Christian Nationalism view to be radicalized," the letter reads.

The letter says its signers feel compelled to condemn such expressions, "just as many Muslim leaders have felt the need to denounce distorted, violent versions of their faith" in previous years.

The statement was a response to the form of Christianity that was displayed by some of the attackers, typified by a prayer delivered in the Senate chamber and captured on film by a reporter for the *New Yorker* showing a bare-chested Jacob Chansley, sometimes identified as the "Q Shaman," thanking God for "allowing us to get rid of the communists, the globalists and the traitors within our government."

“We reject this prayer being used to justify the violent act and attempted overthrow of the Government,” the letter reads.

Signers include pastors from a variety of theologically conservative traditions, such as Church of the Nazarene, Evangelical Covenant Church and the Christian Reformed Church.

Jerushah Duford, a granddaughter of the late evangelist Rev. Billy Graham, and Walter Brueggemann, religion scholar and Protestant theologian, were among the best-known signers. They were joined by the Rev. Eugene Cho, CEO of the Christian advocacy group Bread for the World; Lisa Sharon Harper, author, activist and founder and president of ; the Rev. Jim Wallis, founder of Christian advocacy group Sojourners; Shane Claiborne, founding member of The Simple Way; and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, an evangelical Christian author, minister and activist.

The letter comes on the heels of a new report by the conservative American Enterprise Institute revealing that more than a quarter of white evangelicals—more than any other religious group polled – believe the debunked QAnon conspiracy theory, an ideology that was well represented among insurrectionists on Jan. 6.

Other evangelical leaders have railed against the religious expressions of insurrectionists without specifically zeroing in on Christian nationalism. In a statement sent to Religion News Service days after the attack, Russell Moore, head of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, declared that “the god of QAnon and the Proud Boys and their fellow travelers is not the God of Jesus Christ but the ancient serpent of Eden, which Jesus called ‘a murderer from the beginning.’”

He added: “The way of Jesus Christ is a very different way from that one.”

A group of mostly liberal-leaning Christians—referring to

themselves as “Christians Against Christian Nationalism”—also condemned the ideology in a 2019 letter, calling it a “persistent threat to both our religious communities and our democracy.” {eoa}

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