

Christian Nationalism: Un-American and Un-Christian

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1. Today, I am going to talk about the increasing support for what is called “Christian nationalism,” the idea that the United States was founded as a Christian nation and its laws should therefore reflect Christian values as defined by Christian nationalists.
2. I am going to tell you flat out where I stand on this issue – Christian nationalism is not only un-American, it is un-Christian.
3. And its continuing support among a growing number of Americans is a threat to all of us, as well as to Christianity itself.
4. I intend to prove these propositions beyond a reasonable doubt.

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1. This is not a position I have come to only recently.
2. This op-ed was published in the *Star* on August 16, 2012.
3. Here is what I wrote more than 12 years ago: **“As our Founding Fathers recognized, a real American is not defined by religious beliefs. A real American believes, regardless of his or her own faith tradition, in the ideal of religious pluralism and freedom upon which our country was founded and which continues to draw to our shores people with many religious beliefs and practices. It is that ideal that we as American have in common, whether we were born Methodist in rural Indiana or into any other religious tradition in any other part of the world. Those who attack that ideal are attacking the very essence of what holds us together and makes us great.”**

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1. But, unfortunately, as we all know, the ideal of religious pluralism is being attacked with more and more success.

2. On June 19, 2024, Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry signed into law a bill requiring all Louisiana public class rooms, from elementary schools to universities, to display a copy of the Ten Commandments.
3. The sponsor of a similar bill in Oklahoma said: "**The Ten Commandments is one of the foundations of our nation.**"

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1. On June 27, 2024, the Oklahoma superintendent of schools ordered that all school districts in his state "teach the Bible," whatever that means.
2. In explaining his decision, he said: "**The Bible is one of the most historically significant books and a cornerstone of Western civilization, along with the Ten Commandments.**"
3. It is not clear whether Oklahoma schools are to teach the Roman Catholic version of the Bible, which includes 73 books, or the Protestant version, which includes only 66 books.
4. It is also not clear which of the many translations of the Bible Oklahoma schools are to teach.
5. All those details seem irrelevant to the idea that the Bible and the Ten Commandments underpin the laws and traditions of the United States.
6. As we will see, that is simply a myth at best and a blatant lie at worst.

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1. Christian nationalism is not only on the rise in places such as Oklahoma and Louisiana.
2. Micah Beckwith, an avowed Christian nationalist, is the Republican candidate for Indiana lieutenant governor.
3. According to a recent survey, 40 percent of Hoosier adults support the ideas underlying Christian nationalism.
4. So let's look at those ideas.

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1. There is a common assumption that because the earliest European settlers in what became the United States were Christians, the Founding Fathers were also Christians.
2. But religious beliefs changed dramatically between when the Puritans began coming to North America and when the Founding Fathers began considering a separation from England.
3. By the middle of the eighteenth century, American religious beliefs had been greatly influenced by the so-called “Enlightenment” in Europe and the writings of John Locke, Isaac Newton, and others.
4. From these writings came “Deism,” a belief that God created the universe and its laws, gave humans power to reason, and got out of the way.
5. Deists, in general, rejected all texts claimed to have divine origins and rejected accounts of miracles that would violate the laws established by God.
6. Many, if not most, of the Founding Fathers were either acknowledged Deists or articulated religious views consistent with Deism.

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1. Thomas Paine, whose pamphlet *Common Cause* provided much of the impetus for the Declaration of Independence, was an acknowledged Deist who opposed all forms of organized religion.
2. He was critical of the Bible, writing in *The Age of Reason*: **“People in general do not know what wickedness there is in this pretended word of God. *** Good heavens! it is quite another thing; it is a book of lies, wickedness, and blasphemy; for what can be greater blasphemy than to ascribe the wickedness of man to the orders of the Almighty?”**

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1. George Washington periodically attended church near Mount Vernon, but did not take communion, from which the church leadership concluded that he was not a **“real Christian.”** Waldman, *Founding Faith* at 58.

2. **“He often spoke of God, Providence, the Great Architect, and other formulations for the deity, but to Christ in only a handful of instances.”** *Id.*

3. One author recently concluded: **“By [the] standards . . . of twenty-first century conservative evangelical Christians, Washington was not Christian”** because he did not accept Jesus as his personal savior and rejected the Bible as God’s revelation. *Id.* at 60.

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1. John Adams was **“especially influenced by enlightenment theists such as John Locke, who argued that reason applied to faith.”** Waldman, *Founding Faith* at 34. .

2. He **“came to reject major parts of orthodox Christian theology,”** including the Trinity, original sin and justification by faith. *Id.* at 35.

3. Like the Deists, Adams believed in a God who had created the universe and its laws, but concluded that Christianity has been infected with **“millions of fables, tales, legends”** and had become **“the most bloody religion that ever existed.”** *Id.*

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1. The religious views of Thomas Jefferson are probably the best known of the Founding Fathers, in part because he created a Bible that eliminated all the claimed miracles, including the virgin birth and resurrection of Jesus.

2. He believed that Jesus had been a great moral teacher, but denied that he was divine.

3. For Jefferson, **“[t]he authors of the canonical Gospels were ‘ignorant, unlettered men’ who laid ‘a groundwork of vulgar ignorance, of things impossible, of superstitions, fanaticisms, and fabrications.’”** Waldman, *Founding Faith* at 73.

4. He was especially critical of Paul, whose writings form much of the New Testament, writing: **“Of this band of dupes and imposters, Paul was the great Coryphaeus, and first corrupter of the doctrines of Jesus.”** *Id.*

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1. Benjamin Franklin publicly acknowledged being a Deist.
2. As one author notes: **“It was the perfect theology for some one like him, because it imagined a Holy Inventor who wrote the natural laws and then gave humans the brains to master nature.”** Waldman, *Founding Faith* at 19.
3. Like most Deists, Franklin believed that **“all religions were basically the same”** and **“came to believe that religious toleration was vital to a free society.”** Morgan, *Benjamin Franklin* at 56.
4. Franklin did not attend church and was openly critical of Christianity.
5. **“He wrote acidly that Christians declare themselves better than other faiths, and then offered examples of pagans, heathens, and Muslims who were more generous than Christians.”** Waldman, *Founding Faith* at 21.
6. Like Jefferson, Franklin rejected the miracles recited in the Bible, including the virgin birth and resurrection of Jesus, and at least doubted that Jesus was divine. *Id.* at 22 – 23.

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1. Of the Founding Fathers, one whose known views do not rule out him being considered an orthodox Christian is James Madison.
2. The reason for this is simple – unlike the others we have discussed, Madison said essentially nothing about his faith.
3. **“Unlike Jefferson, Adams and Franklin, who spelled out their theology over and over again at different stages, Madison left only small clues.”** Waldman, *Founding Faith* at 98.

4. What we do know about Madison's beliefs is that he was fiercely in favor of religious freedom.
5. From the time he was 22, Madison **"came down firmly on the side of religious freedom, arguing that only liberty of conscience could guarantee civil and political liberty."** Holmes, *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers* at 98.

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1. With this understanding of the religious views of our Founding Fathers, we can now turn to the documents they wrote and approved.
2. As we will see, those documents are fundamentally inconsistent with the notion that the United States was founded as a Christian nation.
3. Let's first look at the Declaration of Independence, which **"Christian nationalists often argue . . . embraces Judeo-Christian principles."** Seidel, *The Founding Myth* at 53.
4. In the first place, it is important to understand that the Declaration of Independence did not establish anything – it merely declared the right of the colonies to be free from the government of England.
5. As one author correctly notes: **"The Constitution, not the Declaration, created our government and laws."** *Id.*

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1. More important, **"[t]he Declaration of Independence is an anti-Christian document."** Seidel, *The Founding Myth* at 59.
2. Its purpose was to reject allegiance to King George III, the head of the Church of England, who everyone assumed held his title lawfully.
3. As a result, Christians were admonished to obey him.
4. As Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans: **"Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by**

God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.” *Romans* 13:1 – 2.

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1. This and similar biblical teachings were used by loyalist ministers in both the United States and abroad to preach *against* independence.

2. For example, Jonathan Boucher, an Anglican minister in Maryland, argued that seeking independence was against God’s will because “[t]he **only circumstance relative to government, for which the Scriptures seem to be particularly solicitous, is in inculcating obedience to lawful government.**” Seidel, *The Founding Myth* at 62.

3. He wrote: **“Obedience to Government is every man’s duty because it is every man’s interest; but it is particularly incumbent on Christians, because it is enjoined by the positive commands of God.”** Shakeshaft, Paul, *Disciple of St Paul: Jonathan Boucher and the American Revolution* <https://www.eiu.edu/historia/2012Shakeshaft.pdf>

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1. Under Christian teachings, kings ruled with divine authority and therefore could be overruled only by God or under God’s authority.

2. But the Declaration of Independence does not rely on God or even God’s laws to justify rejecting the authority of George III, instead appealing exclusively to self-evident truths.

3. It was for this reason alone that John Lind, an English barrister who supported King George, rejected outright the colonist’s claim to independence in *An Answer to the Declaration of the American Congress*: **“If to what they now demand they were entitled to by any law of God, they had only to produce that law, and all controversy was at an end. Instead of this, what do they produce? What they call self-evident truths, ‘All men,’ they tell us, ‘are created equal.’”** Quoted at Seidel, *The Founding Myth* at 61.

4. But **“Jefferson [who wrote these words] could not rely on any law of god because the laws of god opposed the principles he relied on.”** *Id.*

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1. The Declaration of Independence is also fundamentally inconsistent with biblical teachings about a government’s source of authority.
2. According to the Bible, kings ruled with God’s consent. *E.g., Romans 13:1 – 2.*
3. But the Declaration of Independence proclaims that governments rule with the **“consent of the governed.”**
4. If governments fail to achieve that consent, it is the **“Right of the People to alter or to abolish it”**
5. Because nothing in the Declaration of Independence says anything about governments ruling with the authority or consent of God, it **“directly contradicts Christian principles of governmental authority.”** Seidel, *The Founding Myth* at 65.

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1. There are four references in the Declaration of Independence that Christian nationalists argue reflect Judeo-Christian values.
2. Those are references to “the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God,” “their Creator,” “the Supreme Judge of the world” and “divine Providence.”
3. The first reference was in Thomas Jefferson’s original draft; the others were added by the Continental Congress before the Declaration’s adoption.
4. Before we look at the individual references, we can say with certainty one thing that applies to them all: **“Jefferson, Adams, and Franklin and the Continental Congress *could* have chosen to root the entitlements, endowments, appeals, and protections in Jesus Christ or any other specific god, but they did not. Instead, they carefully selected references that do not specify any religious denomination or sectarian belief.”** Seidel, *The Founding Myth* at 70.

5. In fact, so careful were the authors of the Declaration of Independence to avoid any reference to particular religious figures or beliefs they omitted the customary “in the year of our Lord” from its date.

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1. “The Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God” are not Christian terms.
2. To the extent they are references to any particular religious tradition, they are references to the Deist beliefs held by Jefferson, Adams and Franklin, all of whom contributed to the Declaration of Independence.
3. One author notes: **“The ‘Nature’s God’ of Jefferson’s declaration was thus not a Calvinist God but a deistic god of natural religion discovered through reason.”** Green, *The Second Disestablishment* at 54.
4. John Adams expressly equated “nature’s God” with natural laws, once writing to Jefferson: **“We can never be so certain of any prophesy, or the fulfillment of any prophesy, or any miracle, or the design of any miracle, as we are from the revelation of nature, that is, nature’s God, that two and two are equal to four.”** Seidel, *The Founding Myth* at 78.
5. At the time of the Declaration of Independence, Christians considered Deist ideas about “Laws of Nature” and “Nature’s God” to be heretical.
6. **“Priests condemned . . . those who believe that ‘there is no other divinity or sovereign power in the world except NATURE,’ that ‘God is Nature, and Nature is God.’”** *Id.* at 79.

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1. Here is the text from Thomas Jefferson’s first draft of the Declaration of Independence: **“We hold these truths to be sacred & undeniable, that all men are created equal and independent, and from that equal creation they derive rights inherent and inalienable, among which are the preservation of life, and liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”**
2. The adopted language differs slightly from Jefferson’s draft: **“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that**

they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

3. Are Christian nationalists right in their claim that “their Creator,” added by the Continental Congress, refers to the Judeo-Christian God?
4. Let’s look at Jefferson’s draft, which focuses on man’s “creation.”
5. In pre-Darwin times, virtually all religious traditions in the world agreed that man had been created and had different stories about creation.
6. The Deists believed that, as did Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Aztecs, among many others.
7. And if man was “created,” there had to be a “creator.”
8. In Hinduism, the creator was the god Brahma; for the Aztecs, the creator god was Tezcatlipoca; for the Muslims, it was Allah.
9. Notice that the phrase is not “the Creator” or “our Creator,” much less “God” or “Father” or other terms that might suggest the Christian God.
10. Instead, it is “their Creator,” which referred to whatever or whomever had created the men who had been created equal.
11. There is, of course, no significance to the fact that “Creator” is capitalized – so are “Life,” “Liberty,” and “Happiness.”
12. As a result, **“[r]eaders are meant to interpret this phrase as referring to which creator—god or otherwise—they believe in.”** Seidel, *The Founding Myth* 81.

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1. The appeal in the final paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, as adopted by the Continental Congress, to the “Supreme Judge of the world” no more refers to a specific divine judge than does “their Creator.”
2. Many religions, beginning at least with the ancient Egyptians, believed in divine judgment for human actions while alive.
3. Muslims, Zoroastrians and other traditions also believed in a god of judgment.

4. To the extent that “Supreme Judge of the world” refers to divine judgment, it is not exclusively Christian or even Judeo-Christian.

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1. Finally, the Declaration’s seeking the protection of “divine Providence” does not suggest a uniquely Christian belief, but instead a widespread belief, shared by some Deists, that the gods have some effect on human destiny, or at least the destiny of groups of people.
2. The word “providence,” which does not appear in the King James Bible, the one available to the Founding Fathers, is derived from the Latin term “*providentia*,” which means foresight.

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1. Seneca, the Roman Stoic philosopher who would never be confused with a Christian, formulated the religious connotation of “providence” in an essay trying to reconcile the benevolence of the gods with evil in the world. http://www.sophia-project.org/uploads/1/3/9/5/13955288/seneca_providence.pdf
2. As Jon Meacham writes: **“‘[T]he supreme judge of the world’ and ‘divine providence’ were no more specific to the God of the Bible than ‘Creator’ and ‘Nature’s God.’”** Meacham, *American Gospel* at 73.
3. In summary, to the extent the Declaration of Independence refers to religious ideas, those ideas are in common with most religious traditions, including Islam, Hinduism and the religions of the Romans.

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1. Unlike every prior document establishing governments, including those in the colonies, the United States Constitution makes no reference to God or any higher power and includes no language that can even be construed to suggest a religious purpose or intent.
2. Even the prescribed presidential oath omitted the traditional ending, “So help me, God” – later presidents added that.
3. Shortly after the Constitutional Convention had ended, someone asked Alexander Hamilton why it made no reference to God.

4. He replied, sarcastically, **“We forgot.”** [The Founders' Faith - George Washington, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, religion, faith, beliefs, Thomas Jefferson \(lehrmaninstitute.org\)](#)
5. But the absence of a reference to God or any other deity or religious ideas was not an oversight.
6. As one author has written: **“In light of the unbroken record of invoking God’s name in foundational documents throughout the world, throughout the colonies, and throughout history, the stubborn refusal of the US Constitution to invoke the Almighty is abnormal, historic, radical, and not accidental.”** Waldman, *Founding Faith* at 131.
7. Another writes: **“The lack of a reference to God or a religious purpose in the Constitution should not be surprising considering the religious beliefs of the men involved and their impression of the task at hand.”** Green, *The Second Disestablishment* at 56.

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1. Unlike all previous governments, governmental power under the Constitution did not come from God but from “the people.”
2. This idea did not come from Christian teachings, but **“from ancient Greece and Rome.”** Waldman, *Founding Faith* at 130.
3. And because power came from the people and not from God, the Constitution expressly stated: **“No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.”** Art. VI, Clause 3.
4. This provision **“highlighted the secular nature of the Constitution and the new government’s nonreliance on religious principles.”** Green, *The Second Disestablishment* at 60.
5. During the ratification debates, opponents of this provision expressed objections that seem all too consistent with current views.
6. One person feared that **“pagans, deists, and Mahometans might obtain offices among us.”** Waldman, *Founding Faith* at 134.

7. Another worried that if the president were Jewish, **“our dear posterity may be ordered to rebuild Jerusalem.”** *Id.*

8. Despite those worries, the Constitution was ratified.

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1. Before the ratification of the Constitution by the states, James Madison introduced in the House of Representatives a set of amendments to the Constitution that eventually became known as the “Bill of Rights.”

2. The First Amendment states: **“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”**

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1. All early presidents acting under the Constitution understood that it did not establish a Christian nation or anything of the sort.

2. **“In the first twenty annual presidential addresses, neither George Washington, nor John Adams, nor Thomas Jefferson uttered the name Jesus or Christ.”** Blum, *The Color of Christ* at 13.

3. During the first term of his presidency, George Washington wrote: **“The bosom of America is open to receive, the oppressed and persecuted of all Nations and Religions, whom we shall welcome to a participation of all our rights and privileges.”** Walden, *Founding Faith* at 63.

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1. In 1797, President John Adams, the second president, presented to the Senate, and the Senate ratified, a treaty with Tripoli seeking to bring an end to battles with the Barbary pirates.

2. Article 11 provided: **“As the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion; as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquility, of Mussulmen and as the said States never entered into any war or act**

of hostility against any Mahometan nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.”

3. As Jon Meacham writes, Article 11 **“defines the federal government as secular, not religious.”** Meacham, *American Gospel* at 103.

4. Because Adams was a major contributor to the Declaration of Independence and an active promoter of the adoption of the Constitution, this treaty is all that needs to be cited to reject the claims of Christian nationalists that the United States was founded on the Christian religion.

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1. In 1803, President Jefferson, the third president, wrote a letter to Baptists in Danbury, Connecticut, who had complained to him that Connecticut was discriminating against them in favor of the Congregationalists, the established church.

2. The letter, which had been reviewed by his attorney general, stated: **“I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that the legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between church and State.”**

3. In his autobiography, written in 1821, Jefferson wrote that the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, which he considered the model for the First Amendment, **“comprehended within the mantle of its protection the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and Mahometan, the Hindoo and infidel of every denomination.”** Jefferson, *Autobiography* (1821).

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1. James Madison, our fourth president, was considered **“Father of the Constitution and chaperone of the First Amendment.”** Waldman, *Founding Faith* at 172.

2. During his term, **“[i]n almost every action, he conveyed support for strict separation of church and state.”** *Id.*

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1. Let's look now at the Ten Commandments, which Christian nationalists claim is a foundational document for the United States.
2. Before I go further, let me be clear about this claim – it is absurd.
3. In the first place, there is no such thing as “*The* Ten Commandments.”
4. Look at these posters, each claiming to be the “Ten Commandments.”
5. While each contains ten statements, the ten are not the same.
6. The one on the left ignores the prohibition on the worship of idols and separates the prohibition on coveting into two separate commandments, unlike the version on the right.
7. And the version on the left prohibits killing, while the one on the right prohibits murder – killing and murder are obviously not the same thing.
8. In a Supreme Court case involving the Ten Commandments, Justice Anton Scalia, a Roman Catholic, wrote: **“I doubt that most religious adherents are even aware that there are competing versions [of the Ten Commandments] with doctrinal consequences (I certainly was not).”**
McCreary County v. American Civil Liberties Union, 545 U.S. 844 (2005).

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1. But let's ignore all the issues about which version of the Ten Commandments supposedly influenced our founding and laws and consider an abbreviated Protestant version, the one Louisiana schools must display.
2. Which of these commandments can have had any effect on either our founding documents or our laws?
3. The prohibition against having no other gods is directly contrary to the Constitution.
4. No federal laws have ever prohibited making graven images or taking the name of the Lord in vain, except perhaps in the context of a false oath.

5. We have no laws about honoring our fathers and mothers or coveting, except perhaps when the coveting leads to stealing.
6. We have Sunday closing laws, but they cannot be based on the Ten Commandments because the Sabbath, the Jewish day of rest, is from Friday evening to Saturday evening.
7. So the only possible commandments that could have any effect on our laws are those prohibiting killing, adultery, stealing and bearing false witness or perjury.
8. As one author writes: **“It is not until halfway through god’s most moral precepts that we begin to see . . . at least some semblance to American law and government.”** Seidel, *The Founding Myth* at 209.

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1. But laws against killing, adultery, stealing and perjury **“are not exclusive or original to Judeo-Christianity. They are universal principles that all humans understand and arrive at regardless of their participation in the Judeo-Christian religion.”** Seidel, *The Founding Myth* at 209.
2. Those prohibitions are all included in the Code of Ur-Nammu from Mesopotamia, written on tablets in the Sumerian language in about 2100 B.C., about 900 years before Moses.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Code_of_Ur-Nammu
3. Any claim that it was not until Moses that the Israelites had laws against killing and stealing is ridiculous on its face – are we to believe that before Moses, killing and stealing were okay with them but prohibited everywhere else?
4. Of course, not.
5. Many of the laws given to Moses in the Bible are largely restatements of much earlier Middle Eastern laws, including those in the Code of Hammurabi.

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1. With the claim that our laws are based on the Ten Commandments out of the way, let's turn to my final arguments – Christian nationalism is un-Christian and dangerous to our democracy.
2. There are a number of books on this topic, one written in 2023 by Andrew Whitehead, an Indiana University professor and committed Christian, entitled *American Idolatry: How Christian Nationalism Betrays the Gospel and Threatens the Church*.
3. He writes: “[**Christian nationalists**] **neglect the vital aspects of the gospel like loving your neighbor, seeking justice, and caring for widows and orphans.**” Whitehead, *American Idolatry* at 172.
4. A 2024 book co-authored by Beau Underwood, the senior pastor of Allisonville Christian Church in Indianapolis, flatly concludes: “**Over and over, social scientists have found a troubling association between strong expressions of Christian Nationalism and a variety of retrograde viewpoints.**” Kaylor, *Baptizing America* at 26.
5. Another writes: “**By the time Trump arrived on the scene proclaiming himself their savior, [Christian nationalists] had already traded a faith that privileges humility and elevates ‘the least of these’ for one that derides gentleness as the province of wusses Rather than turning the other cheek, they’d resolved to defend their faith and their nation, secure in the knowledge that the ends justify the means.**” Onishi, *Preparing for War* at 219, quoting from Kristin Kobes du Mez.

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1. Let's look at some of the evidence that supports these claims, made by Christian authors.
2. First, the Bible, which Christian nationalists claim is their guidebook, repeatedly mandates that immigrants be treated justly and with respect.
3. For example, *Leviticus* commands: “**The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.**” *Leviticus* 19:34.

4. *Deuteronomy* is similar: “[God] defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.” *Deuteronomy* 10:18 – 19.

5. *Malachi* says: “So, I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me, says the LORD Almighty.” *Malachi* 3.5.

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1. Despite these express teachings, Christian nationalists are far more likely than other Americans to want to restrict or eliminate immigration.

2. As Andrew Whitehead writes: “**Study after study identifies white Christian nationalism as the cultural framework fostering much of the antipathy American Christians report toward immigrants and refugees.**” Whitehead, *American Idolatry* at 166.

3. According to a survey conducted by Public Religion Research Institute, two thirds of all White Evangelical Protestants, a good proxy for Christian nationalists, believe that immigrants are invading our country and replacing our cultural and ethnic background, compared with only 17 percent of those who are religiously unaffiliated.

<https://www.prr.org/research/a-nation-of-immigrants-diverging-perceptions-of-immigrants-increasingly-marking-partisan-divides/>

4. Unlike every other religious group, a majority of that same group supports passing a law to ban *all* refugees from the United, compared with only 22 percent of those who are religiously unaffiliated. *Id.*

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1. Pastor Underwood’s book flatly states: “**The racism in Christian Nationalism today is important to recognize.**” Kaylor, *Baptizing America* at 27.

2. The authors add: **“The White Christian Nationalist version of patriotism is racist, xenophobic, patriarchal and exclusionary. *** For Christians who seek to be anti-racist—as some mainline Protestants profess as a goal—the danger of Christian Nationalistic ideas runs deeper than just issues of church and state. It can also undermine work in areas to confront racism, misogyny and other heresies.”** *Id.* at 28.

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1. Especially at Christmas, Christians quote *Isaiah*, which predicted a messiah who would be called **“Prince of Peace.”** *Isaiah* 9:6.
2. During his life on earth, Jesus lived up to that advance billing.
3. During the Sermon on the Mount, he said: **“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”** *Matthew* 5:9.
4. Jesus famously told his followers: **“But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.”** *Matthew* 5:39.
5. When the authorities came to arrest Jesus, one of his disciples cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest. *Matthew* 26:51.
6. **“‘Put your sword back in its place,’ Jesus said to him, ‘for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.’** *Matthew* 26:52.

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1. Despite these express teachings of Jesus, **“[t]he millions of white Americans who favor Christian nationalism support the use of firearms to enact violence whenever they deem it necessary.”** Whitehead, *American Idolatry* at 122.
2. **“Waging war, gun violence, the death penalty, and rioting at the Capitol are all acceptable forms of violence under the right circumstances.”** *Id.*

3. “A 2021 survey showed that nine out of ten white Americans who strongly embrace Christian nationalism agree that ‘the best way to stop bad guys with guns is to have good guys with guns.’” *Id.*

4. As you can see here, only 37 percent of evangelical Protestants favor stricter gun control laws, compared with 76 percent of Black Protestants and 61 percent of those with no religious affiliation.

<https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/9/6/189>

5. Professor Whitehead, along with others, sees in this additional evidence of racism: **“The righteousness of violence is limited to those like ‘us,’ however, which naturally excludes racial and ethnic minorities.”** Whitehead, *American Idolatry* at 233.

6. I could go on and on with similar examples, but you get the point – Christian nationalist views are the opposite of what most of us here believe are authentic Christian values, the ones that originated with Jesus.

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1. The un-Christian nature of Christian nationalism is a threat to the very existence of Christianity.

2. More and more people, and especially young people, have become convinced that the views of the Christian nationalists *are* what Christianity is all about and they are having none of it.

3. As Professor Whitehead, a faithful Christian, writes: **“Gaining and selfishly employing political power has *not* served to bring more Americans into the Christian fold. Study after study demonstrates that one effect of the culture-warring of the Christian Right was to actively push people out of the Christian tradition. *** In our effort to retain what we thought was a Christian nation, we have succeeded in pushing more Americans away from the faith.”** Whitehead, *American Idolatry* at 20.

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1. Christian nationalism is also a threat to our democracy.

2. A very recent study by the Public Religion Research Institute found a strong correlation between Christian nationalist beliefs and support for an authoritarian national government. <https://www.prrri.org/press-release/survey-four-in-ten-americans-are-susceptible-to-authoritarianism-but-most-still-reject-political-violence/>
3. Dr. Melissa Deckman, the CEO of the Institute, said this about the study: **“While most Americans do not espouse authoritarian views, our study demonstrates that such views are disproportionately held by Christian nationalists, who we know in our past research have been more prone to accept political violence and more likely to hold antidemocratic attitudes than other Americans.”**
<https://religionnews.com/2024/09/16/new-survey-points-to-correlation-between-christian-nationalism-and-authoritarian-views/>

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1. In the aftermath of the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the United States Capitol, much has been written demonstrating Christian nationalist beliefs at the heart of that violence.
2. One book, by a committed Christian, lays out the evidence for that in great detail. Onishi, *Preparing for War*.
3. Another author concludes, in a postscript written after January 6: **“America’s latest wave of Christian nationalism – Trump’s wave – culminated in this attack. But Christian nationalism did not die on January 6: it may even be more dangerous now, with adherents convinced that ‘God’s plan’ for White Christian America was stolen.”** Seidel, *The Founding Myth* at 309.

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1. Andrew Whitehead, the IU professor, is adamant that it is up to Christians who oppose Christian nationalists to act and to act now.
2. Here is what he writes: **“The [January 6] insurrection will [not] be the last example of violence suffused with Christian symbolism unless and until American Christians consistently confront Christian nationalism. *** To oppose white Christian nationalism is not to give up**

on Christianity. Christianity can be marked by sacrifice, hope, grace, service, faith, and, of course, love. Christians can disentangle our faith from Christian nationalism and thus more closely embody the life and teachings of Jesus, the gospel, in our congregations and communities.”

Whitehead, *American Idolatry* at 49, 190.

3. Another author writes: **“The sad truth is that the silence of the mainline churches has made the Christian Right grow even bolder.”**

Meyers, *Why the Christian Right is Wrong* at 153.

4. Yet another writes: **“So far, the hopes of our Founders have never been proven fully right. And yet they have not been proven entirely wrong. Once again, we are at a time of testing. How it comes out rests, as it always has, in our own hands.”** Richardson, *Democracy Awakening* at 253.

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1. In my opinion, it is time for those of us who see the world much differently from Christian nationalists to counter their false narratives with **“better stories”** and **“better narratives.”** Whitehead, *American Idolatry* at 190

2. Helping to promote what Jesus really said about the poor, violence, and immigrants is a good place to start – I know I don’t have to tell you that.

3. Getting more involved in the political process is another.

4. As the author of one of the books I have quoted repeatedly writes: **“As the myths [of Christian nationalists] are proclaimed with more desperation, we must be prepared to refute them factually and vocally. This book provides the first half of that recipe. You are responsible for the rest. Outspoken resistance is, as Madison might say, the ‘first duty of citizens.’”** Seidel, *The Founding Myth* at 297.

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